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# SUGGESTION AND AUTOSUGGESTION

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# SUGGESTION AND AUTOSUGGESTION

A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL  
STUDY BASED UPON THE INVESTIGATIONS  
MADE BY THE NEW NANCY SCHOOL

BY

CHARLES BAUDOUIN

*Translated from the French by*  
FDEN AND CEDAR PAUL

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TO

EMILE COUL

THE STEADFAST WORKER AND PIONEER



## TRANSLATORS PREFACE

THE dissociation of hypnotism from mysticism and superstition was efficiently begun by two investigators Alexandre Bertrand and James Braid. Bertrand (*Traité du somnambulisme* Paris 1823 *Du magnétisme animal en France* Paris 1826) insisted especially upon the psychological determinants of the phenomena in question. He maintained that what we now call the hypnotic state was brought about through the influence of the imagination of the patients acting upon themselves. Herein we have the germ of Coué's theory of autosuggestion as expounded in the following pages. Braid on the other hand (various writings from 1841 to his death in 1860) inclined at the outset rather to the physiological explanation of what he was the first to term hypnotism. It is interesting to note that Braid was a pioneer in the therapeutic use of reflective autosuggestion. He describes his own sufferings, in September 1844 from a severe attack of muscular rheumatism which had made it impossible for him to sleep for three successive nights. He then hypnotised himself in the presence of two friends. 'At the expiration of nine minutes they aroused me and to my agreeable surprise I was quite free from pain being able to move in any way with perfect ease. I had seen like results with many patients but it is one thing to hear of pain and another to feel it. My suffering was so exquisite that I could not imagine anyone else ever suffered so intensely as myself on that occasion, and therefore I merely expected mitigation so that I was truly and agreeably surprised to find myself quite free from pain. A week thereafter I had a slight return, which I removed by hypnotising myself once more, and I have remained quite free from

rheumatism ever since now nearly six years. The observation is quoted by Arthur Edward Waite in his biographical introduction to *Braid on Hypnotism* (pp 45-6). To the contemporary reader and above all to students of Coué and Baudouin it is obvious that the essential feature in the cure was not the hypnism but the autosuggestion.

Yet the idea that unconscious autosuggestion is responsible for many of our troubles moral and physical was slow to mature. Even to day people fail to recognise that they are largely wrong when they speak of the ills that flesh is heir to and that they should rather in many cases speak of the ills that fancy breeds. Still more slowly has come the recognition that in reflective autosuggestion scientifically applied we have in very truth the faith that moves mountains. Healers official and unofficial have at all times made use of the power of suggestion but the use has been for the most part unconscious. James Goodhart in his Harveian lectures on *Common Neuroses* (1894 p 129) tells us that 'there are many conditions in which the cure must come mainly from within our function in chief being to call out this dormant power. But for Goodhart the rational treatment of disease was still to be found in skilled advice as to regimen and the like the dormant power of reflective autosuggestion was not yet revealed to his discerning gaze. In the most outstanding British work on psychotherapeutics J Milne Bramwell's *Hypnotism* (third edition 1913), the word autosuggestion is not to be found in the index. Yet Bramwell inclines to accept the theory that the phenomena of hypnotism are chiefly explicable by the conception of the subliminal consciousness and he records as the main feature of this theory that the essential characteristic of the hypnotic state is the subject's power over his own organism. Here we obviously verge upon Coué's teaching. But the affiliations of that teaching can be best understood in the light of a brief analysis of the development of the theory of hypnotism subsequent to the days of Bertrand and Braid.

Substantially it may be said that the theory of the psychological determination of these phenomena now holds the field. Heidenham and others cultivated the physiological theory with vigour and for a time with success. Charcot and the Salpêtrière school maintained that the phenomena of hypnotism were chiefly if not exclusively morbid—that they were manifestations of major hysteria or hystero epilepsy. But by serious investigators to day it is generally admitted that the views of the Nancy school, the views of Liébault and Bernheim represent the truth and that the pathological theory of hypnotism now possesses no more than historical interest. For twenty years A. A. Liébault practised hypnotism at Nancy having a gratuitous clinic for his poorer patients. He rediscovered that expectation is the primary factor in the causation of hypnotism—that increased suggestibility is the leading characteristic of the hypnotic state and that the suggester's influence upon his subjects is exerted through mental rather than through bodily channels. Hippolyte Bernheim professor of medicine at Nancy was the philosophical expounder of these theories and it is with the name of Bernheim (died in 1919 at the age of eighty) that the ideas of the first Nancy school are especially associated. Emile Coué as Charles Baudouin explains in his Preface has like Liébault devoted many of his best years to the practice of psychotherapeutics in a free clinic for a time at Troyes and subsequently at Nancy. Baudouin is the first great theoretical exponent of Coué's teaching. He bears much the same relationship to Coué that Bernheim bore to Liébault. He and Coué will speak for themselves throughout the present volume. Enough here to insist on three of the most essential and novel features in the teaching of the New Nancy School.

1 The main factor in hypnotic phenomena is not heterosuggestion but autosuggestion and as a corollary the chief advantages of psychotherapeutics can be secured without a suggester and without the more salient features of the hypnotic state.

2 Of fundamental importance to success is the recog-

tion of what Coué terms the law of reversed effort the law that so long as the imagination is adverse so long as a countersuggestion is at work effort of the conscious will acts by contraries. We must think rightly or rather must imagine rightly before we can will rightly. In a word our formula must not be who wills can, but who thinks can or who imagines can.

3 The most significant phenomena of autosuggestion occur in the domain of the subconscious (unconscious). The new powers which autosuggestion offers to mankind are based upon the acquirement of a reflective control of the operations of the subconscious. Herein as Baudouin shows in his Preface and his Conclusion the teachings of the New Nancy School at once confirm and supplement the theories of the Freudians and the data of psychoanalysis.

In the subtitle of *Suggestion and Autosuggestion* we are told that it is a psychological and pedagogical study. The educational applications of the teachings of the New Nancy School are if possible of even greater interest and importance than the curative applications. It is not always easy to separate the two categories, for from a wide outlook the mentality of the majority of normal human beings the products of what passes to-day by the name of education and the outcome of the suggestions of our exceedingly rudimentary social environment may be said to have an essentially morbid quality and to need all the relief that can possibly be given by the healing art. Consequently the apostles of the new psychology the Freudians equally with the pupils of the New Nancy School are educationists as well as therapists. We find a whole section on Education and Child Study in Ernest Jones's *Psychoanalysis* while the American writer Wilfrid Lay has recently supplemented his volume *Man's Unconscious Conflict* by a work devoted to the educational side of Freudianism and entitled *The Child's Unconscious Mind*. But the implications of Coué's practical discoveries and of Baudouin's theories are destined to influence educational work more radically even than

Freudianism can influence it. Intelligent educators have long recognised that a large proportion of the effects of education good or bad are due to suggestion but a few years ago M. W. Keatinge in his volume *Suggestion in Education* (first edition 1907 second edition 1911) criticised the term autosuggestion as misleading. He wrote 'the idea is really suggested from without and appears to be self suggested only to the person in whose mind it has been latent. Nevertheless most careful readers of Baudouin's book will we think agree that in education as in psychotherapeutics what goes on in the subject's subconscious is what really counts in the whole process and that upon the successful appeal to the subconscious largely depends the success of the teacher no less than the success of the healer. Educational theory will have to be wholly reconsidered in the light of the doctrine of autosuggestion as taught at Nancy and at the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute in Geneva. A careful examination of the successes of the latest educational methods like those of Maria Montessori and those of Faria de Vasconcellos (*A New School in Belgium* London 1919) will show that their value is in large part due to an unwitting appeal to the subconscious and to a skilful though not as yet fully understood utilisation of the pupils' powers of autosuggestion.

As for the philosophical psychological and ethical implications of the new doctrine yet more interesting (to persons interested in such abstractions) than its bearings upon pedagogy and upon therapeutics it is not for the translators to add a word here to what Baudouin writes in his eloquent Conclusion on Suggestion and the Will. Those who like to know whither they are being led may usefully read this brief philosophical section before approaching the preliminary problem What is Suggestion. In our opinion the Conclusion is equally valuable as a preamble to the Introduction and might be read first as well as last. For after making that intimate acquaintance with *Suggestion and Autosuggestion* which is one of



the privileges of a translator we unhesitatingly endorse the author's claim that the teachings of the New Nax School are destined in conjunction with the teachings of psychoanalysis to effect a renovation of psychology, medicine and pedagogy. As supplements to Bergsonism the two will probably achieve the renovation of philosophy as well.

EDEN AND CLARA PAUL

LONDON *May* 1920.

# AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE THIRD FRENCH EDITION, CONTAINING AN ANSWER TO CRITICISM

WHEN the first edition of *Suggestion and Autosuggestion* was published the members of the New Nancy School were few in number and their reputation was small. The development of the School had been checked by the war and was only just beginning to show a fresh impetus. Hardly any region had suffered from the scourge more than Lorraine and here the arrest of social life was even more conspicuous than elsewhere. The champions of autosuggestion had to concentrate their attention upon practical matters and they continued to neglect theory. No one had hitherto published an adequate account of the movement. In the first volume of *Médications psychologiques* (1919) Pierre Janet who cast his net very wide made no mention of Coué although he found a place for the most anomalous therapists even including Antoine the Healer.

My childhood and most of my youth were spent in Nancy. My imagination had been stirred by the wonders performed by Bernheim, who would order his subjects to "burn themselves by touching a cold stove—the burn duly making its appearance. Naturally therefore I was ready to feel an interest somewhat later in Coué's early successes. Those were the days when all his work was still done in a little room. How few now, remember the good old days. People who are ready to accuse Coué of beating the big drum, know nothing of these modest beginnings.

For my part, I was immediately convinced that the

inconspicuous achievements at Nancy would in the end become famous I was convinced (why should I not say so frankly?) that they would mark an epoch in the history of the human mind I was certain of it by the time I was twenty years old But it was equally clear to me that the movement was likely to be ignored for a considerable period unless it could find an exponent of its theoretical aspects When I wrote my book on the subject it was to bear witness to what I had seen Some of my friends and readers were surprised that I should enter this new field of work that I should write a psychological treatise with therapeutical implications Some of them even blamed me and perhaps with justice The excursion was hardly in accordance with my own principles hardly in accordance with the "concentration" I advocated But there were extenuating circumstances As I have explained I had to bear testimony, for no better qualified witness was forthcoming Besides I did not pretend that I was myself building a monument of experimental science The monument is now being built stone by stone and it will be the work of many hands Medical practitioners and psychologists of various countries in the old world and the new are labouring at it My only ambition was to urge them to the task In this respect, I have had a fair measure of success, and my part is played On the other hand I think I am entitled to say that the excursion of which I have spoken was not an idle excursion that my book was not amateurish Although I consider a lack of concentration disastrous I share Goethe's opinion that we may strive to retain a certain amount of universality without falling into the pit of dilettantism I even think that the effort to retain universality is a necessary part of mental hygiene in an age when over-specialisation is rife so that the specialists appear at times to be burrowing blindly like moles

Do I seem to be offering excuses for having written this book? As a matter of fact, my conscience pricks me "One who overshoots the mark, misses the target,

and I am rather afraid that I have overshot the mark! My aim was to draw attention to researches which were being ignored. The result has been an excess of attention—which is as bad as no attention at all. And fashion has taken a hand in the game. I learn from the

Westminster Gazette that the English version of my book published in the autumn of 1920 promptly aroused a sensation both among scientists and the general public. As a result of this wave of popularity spreading all over Britain and beyond there have been daily references to autosuggestion in the British newspapers—references that range from grave to gay. They are to be encountered in the advertisements of sermons in political caricatures in the puffs of life assurance societies. Autosuggestion is the fashion. Now fashion is often a misfortune and when I saw this sort of success looming I found it hard to resist the temptation to despise my own work.

Suggestion has attained the degree of popularity in which men and doctrines find their worst enemies among their admirers. Enthusiasts voice such preposterous exaggerations that they discredit the method in the minds of serious thinkers. We must react vigorously against these exaggerations even if in thus reacting we have to say things that will be disagreeable to certain adepts and have to give them a salutary cold douche. I am indebted to my English translators Eden and Cedar Paul for having promptly taken such a line and for having denounced the 'epidemic mania' which was spreading through their country. Is it necessary to repeat yet again that we have nothing to do with mesmerism, Christian Science, theosophy, spiritualism or any form of occultism, and that the essential task of the New Nancy School has been to disentangle autosuggestion from the nebula of these doctrines? (A nebula that may be rich in promise for the science of to-morrow but which to-day is nothing but a nebula.) Our endeavour has been to lay the first foundations—nothing more than the first foundations—of the experimental study of auto-

suggestion. Nowhere have we trespassed into the realm of metaphysics or into the domain of religion. Let none seek in this book what it makes no attempt to give.

The criticisms of scientists have really been levelled against the exaggerations of misguided enthusiasts. I do not hesitate to say that I have far more sympathy with some of my critics than with a great many of my admirers. I may add that the adversaries who have brought autosuggestion back to the platform of the critical spirit and of rational discussion have done yeoman's service to the cause they believed themselves to be opposing. By an ironical compensation the fanatical admirers have hindered the movement they hoped to further.

The criticisms may be classed under two heads: theoretical and practical. Different critics raised much the same objections so that there is no reason to answer any one critic in particular. A complete and extremely interesting general statement of objections will be found in two articles that appeared in the Genevese periodical

*Vers l'Unité* for March and April 1922. The first by Monsieur Frutiger is entitled *Volonté ou Imagination* and the second by Dr Charles Odier is entitled *Toujours à propos de Coué*. In other quarters substantially the same objections have been raised though not always with the intelligence and courtesy displayed by these authors.

## I

Most of the theoretical objections are the outcome of misunderstanding or of inadequate information. The critics launch their shafts at Couéism. But the very word minted in England conveys a misunderstanding. The termination 'ism' generally speaking denotes a theory. Now Coué is not a theoretician and has no ambition to be one so there can be no such thing as "Couéism" in the sense of "Coué's theory". Obviously, the critic who turns over the pages of Coué's popular handbook *Self-Mastery through conscious Autosuggestion*

will have no difficulty in exposing its deficiencies on the theoretical side. But to pass judgment on autosuggestion simply as the outcome of a study of this lecture (a lecture which excellently fulfils the purpose for which it was designed) is as if we were to pass judgment upon Einstein's physics after reading a popular magazine article on the subject. I have good reason to know that some of the most acrimonious criticisms have been written by persons who have not found time to read *Suggestion and Autosuggestion*.

The foregoing remarks apply also to the critics who quote from my booklet *Culture de la force morale*. The text of this little volume consists of popular lectures in which the presentation of theory was subordinated to the need for plain and forcible exposition. I have a right to ask that those who criticise my theories should examine the work I have devoted to the theoretical aspects of the topic. Those who take the trouble to read *Suggestion and Autosuggestion* will see that the famous struggle between the imagination and the will is not there presented as a struggle between two entities. I showed that the phenomena of that struggle may be subsumed under a law which I have termed the law of reversed effort, a law which operates under specific conditions—though I do not deny for a moment that these conditions have not as yet been fully elucidated. Moreover I have referred to Abramowsky's experiments on the psychogalvanic reflex as bearing on the law of reversed effort and have written (*Suggestion and Autosuggestion* p. 193). I am confident that here will be found an experimental verification of the law of reversed effort and a way of measuring its effects.

Some of the critics have described the New Nancy School as a sort of mutual admiration society. Readers of *Suggestion and Autosuggestion* will know that the charge is quite unwarranted. The very name of 'school' is inapposite. The 'New Nancy School' comprises a group of investigators—medical practitioners, psychologists and university professors—many of whom live

and work a long way from Nancy and the adherents of the School are anything but dogmatic. We are not one another's disciples. Nor indeed are we Coué's disciples as that term is ordinarily understood. We look upon Coué as the unassuming but talented originator of a movement which has already become much bigger than its founder and will soon bulk far more largely than all those who are at present working in it. Coué is for us what Pestalozzi is for the advocates of the new methods of education. His role was to give the practical demonstration that was to launch new and inchoate ideas—ideas which for a long time to come will be subject to revision and further revision. Since he has not the pen of a ready writer, and since he has no itch for fame it would have been easy for one or other of us to steal his thunder and to pose as leader of a school. If some one with a recognised position, some university professor perhaps had been willing to play so mean a part the cause might have been well served. What our official scientists find the hardest morsel to swallow is that Coué does not belong to their own caste. For them the habit makes the monk!

Utterly wrong headed is the attempt to belittle the empiricism of such as Coué by contrasting it with the abstraction science for without this despised empiricism there would never have been any science at all. No less mistaken on the other hand is it to confound Coué's practical work with the theories of auto suggestion which have been elaborated and are still being elaborated in connection with that work. These two opposing tactics that of sowing division in the hope of conquest and that of confusing the issues may be good diplomacy. I am certain that they are neither good criticism nor good science.

## II

Let us turn to the practical objections. They may be summarised as follows. In most cases, all that suggestion can do is to suppress symptoms, among them, pain,

but it cannot affect the primary disorder Pain is a useful reaction The patient when his pain has been relieved will fancy himself cured Neglecting further treatment he will grow worse 'The danger of such an issue will be greater in proportion as suggestion is practised with less medical supervision

The criticism contains elements of truth but substantially it likewise is based on misunderstandings Nor do I think that I shall find it difficult to come to terms with my opponents

Clearness will be promoted by examining the question of symptoms under three heads physical psychical and moral

I As far as concerns bodily disorders suffice it to say that in many instances suggestion leads to a tangible cure of the disease and not to the mere suppression of pain and other symptoms Still we must agree that at times the effect of suggestion does not go beyond the relief of symptoms That is no reason against the use of suggestion any more than it is a reason against the use of other calmatives

Moreover the suppression of a symptom is often the first step towards cure For instance we have to treat a consumptive Let us suppose that suggestion enables us (and in fact it often does enable us) to relieve the insomnia to restore the appetite and to alleviate the violence of the cough without suppressing the expectoration Of course we have merely relieved symptoms and have had no direct influence on the tubercle bacillus But if a consumptive can sleep nine hours at a stretch without being wakened by a thunderstorm if he has a hearty appetite and digests well if he is no longer racked and exhausted by useless coughing fits—he is on the high road to recovery

This example must not be unduly generalised Relief of suffering is not always curative but that is not an argument against the relief of suffering The suggester has been compared to a practitioner who is content to prescribe a soporific when a surgical operation is urgently



indicated But we can turn the comparison the other way about If we admit that the operation is essential does it follow that we ought not to give the patient an anæsthetic ?

What remains valid in the criticism is that the patient must not be led to mistake relief for cure and that he must be medically examined I fully agree

If practitioners of suggestion have been accused of disregarding the need for medical examination this has been because the critics have so often failed to draw a distinction between autosuggestion and Christian Science As regards the latter method the criticism is an old one and is justified for the teachers of Christian Science expressly forbid the faithful to consult a doctor For my part I have always insisted upon the need for medical examination

Nevertheless in existing circumstances the practitioner of autosuggestion may feel entitled to dispense with medical examination Then his patient is to be treated without any diagnosis having been made ? No not at all ! On the continent of Europe, at any rate suggestion does not as yet enjoy a large measure of public confidence People turn to it as a last resort when all other means have failed Those who visit the suggester do not come without a diagnosis They come with twenty diagnoses ! The need for a twenty first is not always obvious Sound therefore though the criticism is theoretically it has not for the moment much practical importance But in the near future if present trends continue it will become increasingly weighty Suggestion being now fashionable there is danger that people will adopt it blindly will rush headlong to its use Suggestion is here on the same footing as physical culture We cannot forbid chamber gymnastics we cannot insist upon a qualifying examination for every practitioner of physical culture (though there is scope for a good farce in the idea), but the general public must be made to understand that the practice of physical culture may be inexpedient unless there is medical supervision In like

where suggestion is concerned we have sometimes to be iterative in our insistence on the need for medical examination—and on the need for a critical attitude of mind

Doctors who have recognised the dangers here touched upon and who are at the same time convinced of the value of autosuggestion desire collaboration between the practitioners of Couéism and the medical faculty. The idea is an excellent one but those who propound it as a novelty and still more those who express doubts as to the possibility of its realisation are a day too late for the fair for the collaboration has been going on for a long time to the perfect satisfaction of both parties. Besides medical practitioners are to an increasing extent adopting Coué's methods. Various institutes for the application of these methods have been organised under medical supervision. There is one at Vevey the Institut Coué d'Autosuggestion where physical treatment (electrotherapeutic hydrotherapeutic and dietetic) is reinforced by psychological methods—by suggestion and psychoanalysis. There is also the Coué Institute for the Practice of Autosuggestion in London.

2 The mention of the use of psychoanalysis as well as suggestion at the Vevey Institute may serve to introduce us to the second form of the criticism we are considering—its application to the use of suggestion in nervous and psychical disorders. There is a tendency to contrast psychoanalysis with suggestion and to regard them as mutually exclusive. I shall not waste time rebutting the charges of empiricism and even obscurantism which have been levelled at suggestion by those who contend that psychoanalysis can monopolise the right to be termed 'scientific'. Such charges can be brought against anything the accuser is pleased to select—and in fact everyone knows that in France the majority of medical practitioners continue to stigmatise psychoanalysis itself as empirical and obscurantist. Attacks of this calibre count for nothing against either psychoanalysis or suggestion.

A more interesting form of the criticism is the contention that suggestion is dangerous because it creates 'repressions'. Here again is a repetition of the complaint that we considered in the previous section. Applied in the nervous and psychical sphere it amounts to saying that suggestion can only suppress symptoms whereas psychoanalysis, which works by overcoming repressions effects a radical cure. This form of the criticism is the classical objection of the uncompromising psychoanalysts. I have discussed it in an article entitled *Les idées nouvelles sur la suggestion* which I contributed to the periodical "Scientia". The matter is also fully considered in my *Studies in Psychoanalysis* Chapter Four "Mixed Method Psychoanalysis and Autosuggestion". It would be superfluous to reproduce the arguments used elsewhere. I am well aware that autosuggestion often fails unaided, to cure nervous troubles, and I agree that in these cases psychoanalysis is indicated. But I have yet to find a convincing argument against the joint use of psychoanalysis and autosuggestion. The reasons given are of an *a priori* character. They are based upon psychoanalytical postulates which may have some value as working hypotheses but are by no means endowed with absolute validity. The ultimate test must be the test of experience. As far as my own experience goes the results of a joint use of the two methods have been most encouraging.

3 Finally we come to the same criticism in the form voiced by the moralists. Autosuggestion can abolish pain. Is it always a good thing to do this? Ought we to aim at the total suppression of moral suffering? Should we not bear in mind the words of wisdom of those who have extolled the value of pain? Man, they tell us, is an apprentice. Pain is the master-craftsman.

Once more I may be allowed to point out that I myself mooted the question. If the reader will turn to page 182 of this book he will find the following passage: 'To sum up suggestion can assuage mental pain. But is such assuagement always desirable? Here we enter

upon a very different question and it is one which lies beyond the scope of the present work. All the more then does it lie beyond the scope of this Preface. I do not underrate its importance and I hope to return to it on another occasion—to discuss it as one among several problems which the new psychology presents to philosophy.

It seems to me however that merely to insist on the fact that this criticism of the moralists is nothing more than a restatement of the old objection that suggestion suppresses symptoms already throws light on our difficulty. Monsieur Durand Pallot sees this clearly. Let me summarise what he says in his article *L'autosuggestion et M. Coué de Nancy* (Semaine Littéraire Geneva March 4 1922). Just as it would be dangerous he says to suppress by suggestion the sensation of fatigue, seeing that fatigue is a useful reaction so in like manner it may be dangerous to suppress moral suffering. My comment is that the biological unity of the human being is such that we must certainly incline to regard physical pain and moral suffering as akin and to believe that the latter has a symptomatic value no less than the former. To that extent and only to that extent moral suffering may be a useful reaction. It tells us that there is a trouble it warns us that there is a conflict which ought to be resolved, it may thus manifest itself as a crisis in the development of the soul. But moral suffering cannot be an end in itself. 'Out of suffering joy,' said Beethoven and the composer has been held up to us as an example as the eulogist of pain. Yet we should err were we to make a cult of pain just as we should err were we to extol for their own sake the growing pains of childhood. Mankind has been far too ready to make a cult of suffering and has been led thereby to self suggest a superfluity of affliction of which we can relieve ourselves by wiser suggestions.

'Hitherto,' writes Maeterlinck in *Sagesse et Destinée* mankind has been like an invalid tossing restlessly in bed, trying thus to find repose. None the less the only helpful words ever said to this invalid have been said

by those who have spoken to him as if he had never been ill

This is not an argument for shunning or repudiating all pain. Here we trench on the concerns of philosophy and on those of our most intimate convictions. Science furnishes us with the means for the attainment of certain ends. It is a matter for further consideration which among these ends are desirable

CHARLES BAUDOUIN

*June 1922*

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

SINCE the year 1910 there has been in progress at Nancy a psychological and medico pedagogical movement which we are entitled to regard as one of the notable scientific happenings of the present epoch<sup>\*</sup> The terms autosuggestion the education of the will the force of thought self control have long been current But with the rise of the New Nancy School we have for the first time the elements of a really methodical synthesis of the phenomena and the disciplines which these terms connote

The pioneer in this development is a man whose devotion is rivalled by his modesty During the years 1885 and 1886 Emile Coué witnessed the work and the experiments of Liébault who was, as everyone knows the father of the doctrine of suggestion the founder of the first Nancy school, and the teacher of Bernheim Subsequently Coué whose financial resources were slender had to devote most of his energies to gaining a livelihood but like all men whose minds are dominated by an idea he went on working unremittingly in silence and alone He studied the further developments of the Nancy principles in the United States, and was able to extract from the new theories such serious practical and solid content as they possessed He brushed aside all that was no better than advertisement and humbug and he likewise rejected the mystical postulates which underlay some of the theories By the closing years of the nineteenth century Coué

<sup>\*</sup> The presence of the enemy at the gates of Nancy imposed inevitable hindrances to the work, but did not interrupt it completely Herein is a sign of vitality

had grasped the thought of which he was in search. He discovered in autosuggestion the powerful and widely diffused force of which hypnotic suggestion the only form of suggestion hitherto studied in medicine is but one among many applications. Through repeated experiments he was further able to show that this force was efficacious in troubles that were manifestly organic and he proved that the education of the force which though often confused with the will is quite distinct from the will is a simple matter and within the competence of all. Contemporaneously with but independently of the idea of psychoanalysis (developed along divergent lines by Breuer and Freud on the one hand and by the Zurich school on the other) the idea of the New Nancy School clearer than the former and more akin to the French spirit, leads us by a path parallel with that opened by psychoanalysis, into the little-known domain of the subconscious and contributes likewise to the renovation of psychology medicine and pedagogy. The two outlooks are complementary.

By his perfect disinterestedness by the establishment of a free clinic Coué has been able to extend his experience to far wider limits than those known to most practitioners.<sup>1</sup> In this way his energies were directed more and more into the practical field were monopolised if I may use the phrase, by the apostolate of action. He has written no more than a few articles in the bulletin of the school<sup>2</sup> and some papers for psychological congresses.<sup>3</sup> Even scantier are the writings of his pupils. The New Nancy School supplies the elements of an entire psychology but this psychology remains unwritten. It has therefore seemed to me that it would be serviceable to attempt the presentation of a first coordinated outlook, however incomplete, upon questions whose theoretical and practical

<sup>1</sup> During the months preceding the outbreak of the war he was consulted by more than one hundred persons daily so that the annual average of consultations would have been 40 000.

<sup>2</sup> Société lorraine de psychologie appliquée. Quarterly bulletin published by Barbier at Nancy.

<sup>3</sup> A few interesting reports read to the Psychological Congress at Paris in 1913.

interest is of so high an order. Preeminently I have assumed the pedagogical standpoint <sup>1</sup> that is to say, I have attempted to show how by a simple process of education a latent power may be made kinetic. It is this transformation above all that is important.

But on the threshold of my work I wish to pay due homage to the founder of the New Nancy School to the beloved teacher to whom these pages owe the best part of their substance to the man but for whom they would never have been written.

<sup>1</sup> The subject matter of the following pages has been expounded in courses of lectures given at the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute in Geneva where I have also organized the practical and gratuitous teaching of autosuggestion.

CHARLES BAUDOUIN





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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS SUGGESTION ?

WHEN we speak of suggestion our first difficulty is to come to an agreement as to the meaning of the term. Furthermore questions of words are at the same time questions of things a definition is a theory.

It may be true that the meaning of the term suggestion is still somewhat vague but this does not give anyone the right to formulate a purely arbitrary definition haphazard. For by now in the language universally accepted by science the word has come to be applied to precise and well known facts and a definition which should fail to take these facts into the reckoning would be inadmissible.

We have to ask whether all the facts or a very large majority of them exhibit a common specific character. If this be so then wherever such a character is encountered, we are entitled to speak of suggestion.

Among the phenomena universally recognised as belonging to the domain of suggestion two groups of very different type have drawn the attention of various observers some persons inclining especially to the study of one group and others to the study of the other. We have to ascertain which of these two groups is the most characteristic and which we should therefore choose in drawing up our definition of suggestion.

A subject is hypnotised and the operator orders him to look at an imaginary bird the subject has the suggested hallucination. Or, on the other hand a doctor may cure

his patient by a simple affirmation of cure.—In each of these experiments two phases can be distinguished.

1 An idea<sup>\*</sup> proposed or imposed by the operator is accepted by the mind of the subject.

2 This idea undergoes transformation into an action, so that the object of the idea (in the instances given the hallucination or the cure) is realised.

These two phases recur in all the phenomena which it is generally agreed to regard as suggestion. But which of the two is essentially and truly characteristic? Here comes the divergence of opinion.

Public opinion gives its verdict for the first phase. Suggestion, for public opinion has as a fundamental requirement two terms an operator and a subject. It consists in the forcible control of the comparatively feeble will of the subject by the comparatively powerful will of the operator.

The domination will be facilitated by a peculiar state known as hypnosis and it is through the combined influence of domination and hypnosis that we arrive at the second phase, the realisation of the idea.

These strange realisations so astounding in their accuracy which hypnotism has revealed to us could not (it is contended) be brought about in default of certain peculiar conditions of which the leading condition is the presence of a suggester.

The theory just expounded is invalidated by the facts.

To settle the question decisively let us ask what are the profoundest changes which the suggestion of an operator can produce in a hypnotised subject, and let us see whether an *isolated* subject can, unaided produce similar changes in himself.

To clear up this point we may consult one among the practitioners who have done most to widen the frontiers

\* The term *idea* will be used here in the widest sense of representation and will denote the image as well as the concept.

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of hypnosis *Bonjour of Lausanne* Let us examine the maximum result he has secured :

A matter of outstanding interest is the regulation of childbirth by hypnotic suggestion

I wished to ascertain what part the brain could play in the production of childbirth Various theories have been propounded on this subject but none of them take account of the action of the nervous system Why is a child born on any particular day instead of on the following day ? Why do deliveries take place more frequently by night than by day ? I have advanced a theory which lays stress on the accentuation of internal sensations during sleep, the discharge of the nervous and muscular mechanism which leads to the delivery is analogous in my opinion to what we see in dreams During sleep some trifling sensation from the periphery (in the case now under consideration from the uterus) or from the brain (dream) is exaggerated by the brain and sets at work the automatic centres in the medulla which arouse the uterus to contraction If my theory were sound it should be possible I held to establish its truth by the use of hypnotism

Professor Rapin who was at this time chief of the maternity hospital and to whom I had spoken of the matter, begged me to make the experiment in his wards He selected a young woman whose confinement was due three weeks later This was on a Tuesday and I proposed to arrange for the successful fulfilment of the experiment on Friday There were therefore, but three days for preparation

Nevertheless I felt sure that the desired result would be secured for my observations had absolutely convinced me of the part played by the brain in determining the time of delivery

I suggested to the young woman that she should

\* Cf *Bonjour passim*. More particularly *Une preuve nouvelle de l'influence du psychique sur le physique* Communication faite au troisième congrès international de psychologie et de psychothérapie à Munich.

fall asleep on the Thursday at two o'clock that the labour should begin during the night of Thursday-Friday I told her that I should come at seven o'clock in the morning of Friday and that the child would be born at noon.

On Thursday at four in the afternoon I went to the maternity hospital. The patient had fallen into a profound sleep at five minutes past two though her companions had vainly endeavoured to prevent her. I again told her how I had regulated the course of events, and left her with an order that she should no longer hear any voices except those of Professor Rapiu and his assistant\*.

The following day I did not reach the hospital until half past nine instead of seven o'clock, this putting things back by two and a half hours. The woman told me that throughout the night she had been aware of the sensations I had suggested. The obstetric assistant declared that labour had not yet begun and my own examination confirmed this statement. But I was convinced of the reality of the woman's own sensations. They were the outcome of suggestion and I could increase them at will. This is what actually happened. After suggestions had been continued for a quarter of an hour the neuromuscular machinery was at work and by the time when Professor Rapiu arrived at eleven I was satisfied that my experiment was succeeding. He asked me to demonstrate the case to the students. I had not expected this complication but I knew that nothing could now interfere with the successful issue and I agreed. After the clinical lecture Professor Rapiu and I went down into the town, he convinced that the child would not be born for three or four weeks and I myself satisfied that all the phenomena of impending delivery corresponded to what I had desired to produce by suggestion. I had hardly finished lunch when I was summoned to the hospital. By half past three labour was over, and I reawakened the young woman who till then was not aware that her baby had been born. \*

\* *Bonjour Guérison miraculeuses modernes* Baillière Paris 1913

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But the chief importance of Bonjour's work is that he has clearly shown the power of suggestion in organic disease whereas Bernheim believed that suggestion was solely efficacious in functional disorders

Bonjour studied the part played by suggestion in the curing of warts. As the result of numerous observations he came to the conclusion that in about half the cases warts can be cured by a single sitting in which suggestion is practised for two minutes

The cure of a wart is a trifling matter but a little thing may have weighty implications. The definite proof that suggestive treatment can be efficacious in disease that is not purely functional was a discovery of considerable importance

Bonjour passed on to study the suggestive treatment of other organic maladies. For instance one of his patients was suffering from a corneal ulcer which, had it proved intractable would have caused blindness. It was completely cured under hypnotic treatment.\*

Modifications in an important and complicated mechanism like the mechanism of childbirth and on the other hand organic modifications—here we find the maximum of which we were in search. Now if an isolated subject without hypnotism and in the absence of a suggester can present analogous phenomena if, that is to say the subject's own thoughts can in certain instances bring about similar modifications, we shall be obliged to conclude that the essential and characteristic element in the process of suggestion is the second phase (the transformation of the idea into action) and not the first phase (the acceptance of the idea suggested by another)

That this is actually so, the reader will learn from the facts analysed in the following pages

He will see how the idea of an organic modification can

\* Cf the cases reported by Auguste Forel in his *Hypnotism* English translation by H W Armit Rebman London 1906. Among other cases, the author records one of strabismus and hemeralopia due to organic trouble, in which great improvement followed upon suggestive treatment



produce that modification in the individual who thinks the idea. He will see that this action of the idea may be more powerful and more widespread in an isolated subject than in a hypnotised subject and that autosuggestion is really the prototype of all suggestion.

The conclusion must therefore be drawn that the presence of a suggester is not essential to suggestion; it is enough to have a subject. In other words suggestion cannot be defined as a phenomenon of transference wherein the starting point is the consciousness of the operator and the terminus the consciousness of the subject. It must be defined as a work which proceeds wholly within the subject. If we do not allow ourselves to be repelled by barbarisms we may find it convenient to say that suggestion is not an inter-individual phenomenon but an intra-individual phenomenon. Once for all we must distinguish between the idea of suggestion and the idea of submission or dependence upon another's will. We must not confound suggestion with subjection.

We have now to examine an objection which is well stated by Binet in the beginning of his book *La suggestibilité* (Paris 1900). He writes as follows:

We must obviously regard as erroneous the opinion of many investigators who look upon suggestion as an idea which undergoes transformation into an action. On this theory suggestion would be confounded with the association of ideas and with mental phenomena in general. The term would be almost meaningless, for the transformation of an idea into an action is a psychological phenomenon which manifests itself whenever an idea becomes sufficiently powerful. In the narrower significance of the term in what we may call its technical meaning suggestion is a moral pressure exercised by one person on another. The pressure is moral by which we mean that it is not a purely physical operation, but an influence which acts through ideas through the instrumentality of concepts, emotions and volitions. In most cases the spoken word is the means by which this influence is

conveyed and a definite command furnishes the best example of the kind

In a word for Binet the first phase of the above-described process is the characteristic phenomenon whereas for us the second phase is the essential one

The chief reason why Binet holds the view he does is that to define suggestion as an idea which undergoes transformation into an action makes the signification of the term too wide. The word is thereby applied to a great number of well known facts for which no new name is required

Binet's criticism is well founded but the definition which he proposes is open to the same objection and perhaps to a still greater degree. He considers that a definite command is the typical suggestion. A few pages further on in conformity with this view he treats as absolutely identical the words 'suggestibility' and 'obedience'

The truth is that this definition. Suggestion is an idea which undergoes transformation into an action is erroneous because it is incomplete. We do not need to supply an entirely new definition but to add what is lacking

It will suffice to appeal to a characteristic which is plainly manifest in the simplest phenomena of suggestion. The characteristic in question is that the realisation of the idea is brought about by subconscious activity is effected without the subject's being aware of it. The idea of cure is proposed to his mind and the cure is realised without his knowing how. An action is suggested to the subject during induced sleep and he is told that the action is to be performed some hours later. The action duly takes place sometimes without any consciousness on the part of the subject. More frequently however he knows that he is performing the action but is unaware of the true motive. In like manner in the case of childbirth recorded by Bonjour the extensive work which culminated in the realisation of the idea went on outside the subject's consciousness. She only became aware of the result after

everything was over and when informed of the fact by others

In the case of autosuggestion it is precisely this unawareness which enables us to distinguish the phenomenon from an ordinary act of volition from one wherein the subject realises his idea through conscious effort and while uninterruptedly supervising the work of performance

Thus suggestion may be briefly defined as *the subconscious realisation of an idea*

In addition to the reasons already given the foregoing definition of suggestion is useful on theoretical grounds

The mastery of one will by another the act of domination with which some wish to identify suggestion is far from being a simple psychological phenomenon, an instance of the working of a single law. It is the resultant of numerous causes known or unknown, and extremely complex. The first of these causes is the 'personal influence' of the operator. Next on the part of the subject we have the affective rapport between the subject and the operator. This relationship may be one of love it may be one of fear it may be one wherein love and fear are variously mingled.

On the other hand, if suggestion be defined as we propose its working becomes subordinated to a psychological law which is comparatively simple and whose principle is well known even though all its applications may not be familiar. This law is the one revealed by experiments with Chevreul's pendulum: the law in accordance with which the idea tends to realise itself spontaneously. Henceforward suggestion, acting in accordance with a simple law can be looked upon as a 'force' in the scientific sense of this word. Suggestion is the putting into operation by ourselves or by another of the ideoreflex power which exists in us all. (See below, Part III, Chapter II)

\* M. E. Chevreul, *De la baguette divinatoire du pendule dit explorateur et des tables tournantes* Paris 1854

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No longer then need we look upon suggestion as indicating impotence and inferiority on the part of the subject. In essence it is a power which by accident and in special cases may be used against us.

It was in such instances that suggestion was first seen at work. In like manner electricity was first seen at work in the form of lightning before man had learned to turn its powers to account as an illuminant or as a means of transport. The task before us now is to make a good use of suggestion considering it as one of the natural forces and looking upon it not as a power for dominating others but as an instrument for self mastery.

What has been written above shows that suggestion exhibits itself under numerous forms. Hence classification is necessary.

The first thought which arises in this connection is to distinguish between autosuggestion and heterosuggestion, according as the ideoreflex power has been put into operation by ourselves or by some one else.

There need not be any essential difference between the working of these two sorts of suggestion just as there is no essential difference in the growth of a plant when I plant it and when the gardener plants it. But the distinction is none the less important seeing that I shall have to invoke the gardener's aid in so far as I am myself ignorant of gardening.

But in respect of autosuggestions we may make a distinction that is perhaps even more important from the theoretical outlook. As we shall learn there is a psychological condition prerequisite to all autosuggestion. This is that the idea should have a notable intensity, an intensity which is mainly the outcome of attention. An idea upon which attention is peculiarly concentrated, is an idea which tends to realise itself.

We shall find, therefore in the psychology of attention, a principle for the classification of autosuggestions. Ribot rightly distinguishes between spontaneous attention and voluntary attention. The former, the only variety, or almost the only variety, of attention in the lower

animals in savages and in young children is directed towards everything which interests us towards every thing which helps or hinders us in our aims. The latter presupposes reflection and conscious effort. Spontaneous attention is displayed by us when our eye is caught by a striking colour. We show voluntary attention when we deliberately set ourselves to solve a problem.

In like manner we shall distinguish among autosuggestions spontaneous suggestion and reflective or voluntary suggestion according as the preliminary act of attention has been spontaneous on the one hand or voluntary on the other. This distinction is comparable to that between wild plants and cultivated plants.

We have therefore three kinds of suggestion

- |                                      |                    |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 spontaneous suggestion             | } = autosuggestion |
| 2 reflective suggestion <sup>*</sup> |                    |
| 3 induced suggestion                 | = heterosuggestion |

We shall devote ourselves to the study of all of these. The education of the ideoreflex power its training by one self or by others will be considered in the second and third parts. We shall be chiefly concerned with this education for our outlook in the present volume is mainly practical. Part I may be considered as an indispensable introduction to Parts II and III.

But before entering into the heart of the subject let us briefly complete the definition of suggestion given above by showing what are the relationships between the narrower sense in which we employ this term in psychology and the wider sense wherein it is used in current speech.

Etymologically to suggest signifies, to bring in surreptitiously to bring in from beneath. In the wider sense suggestion implies the *surreptitious* appearance of sentiments ideas actions in a word of all the modifications

\* The reader will learn later (Part II Chapter I) why it is better to speak of reflective suggestion rather than of voluntary suggestion.

that occur in our consciousness. The process resembles that by which fresh air enters a room unnoticed beneath a closed door. A thing is suggested to us when it enters our consciousness without conscious effort on our part and sometimes in defiance of our will. It takes its rise in the work of our unconscious or subconscious self.

In this wider signification we may say that a picture suggests to us a sentiment or a memory. We feel that the picture is the cause the occasional cause as Malebranche would have said of the memory or the sentiment. But the deeper cause is to be found in unconscious or subconscious work whose existence we can merely suspect. Something has been stirred in the depths of our personality. Thus suggested states are contrasted with states to the production of which our will has contributed. They are effects whereof we neither see nor know the cause. They are like springs welling forth from the ground.

To help us to pass from this wider sense to the narrower sense of the word let us now make the following hypothesis. The spring we see welling forth from the ground is not the primary source of the stream. At a higher level than the spring a stream has become engulfed beneath the soil (as happens sometimes in the Jura district) to come to light once more after flowing underground. A leaf which falls into the higher stream just as it is about to disappear or one which we deliberately throw into the higher stream will emerge at the spring after it has been faithfully transported by the subterranean current through a region where no one could seize it in passing.

Thus an idea which has been introduced into the mind or one which we have ourselves voluntarily introduced will produce its effect as the sequel of subconscious activities and at the close of a shorter or longer period.

That is what is meant by suggestion as we understand it in the technical sense of the term. Between this technical sense and the wider sense given to the word in everyday speech there is a difference analogous to that which exists between 'force' in common parlance and 'force' as understood by physicists. There is no radical difference

between the latter and the former but in the technical use of the term we have less extension and greater precision

It is well that this should be so and that a word when it passes from current use into technical use should remain faithful to its derivation and to the genius of language

**PART ONE**  
**SPONTANEOUS SUGGESTION**



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## CHAPTER ONE

### WHY DO WE IGNORE AUTOSUGGESTION ?

A KNOWLEDGE of spontaneous suggestion is the necessary foundation for all reflective suggestion. We can resist or correct nature only in proportion as we are able to make a stand against nature by the use of nature's own weapons in a word by imitating nature. And we can only imitate nature in so far as we know her. Now autosuggestion in its spontaneous form is a natural phenomenon of our mental life as natural as the phenomenon termed emotion or the phenomenon termed idea. Moreover the former phenomenon occurs just as frequently as either of the two latter. These statements are true although we do not play upon words although we refrain from extending the significance of the term suggestion until it comes to denote (as in the usage of some writers) emotion and the association of ideas. For our part we have been careful at the outset to restrict its meaning and we shall sedulously avoid using it in any wider sense.

But if autosuggestion be a phenomenon of everyday experience and if it be one which goes on within us why is it so often overlooked and why does its discovery come with the force of a revelation ? There are numerous reasons

1 In the first place let the reader recall the definition of suggestion. He will remember that suggestion is a phenomenon exhibiting three phases

First phase the idea of a modification

Second phase the work of realisation performed unconsciously as far as the actual ego is concerned

Third phase the appearance of the modification that has been thought

Now the second phase occurs without our being aware

of it. Here then we have a causal chain whose two ends are within our grasp but whose middle eludes us. Not without a certain amount of reflection can we convince ourselves that the ends we hold belong to the same chain.

2. On the other hand this reflection is from the nature of the case absent from our habitual suggestions for these are above all spontaneous phenomena. Examples to be subsequently given will make the reader understand more clearly the extent to which suggestion in its natural form is free from conscious effort. But inasmuch as we have said that an act of spontaneous attention is the starting point of spontaneous suggestion it will suffice for the moment if the reader will bear in mind how little such an act which takes place without conscious effort is likely to leave deep traces in the memory or to arouse retrospectively reflection. Doubtless the object which attracts my spontaneous attention the light which dazzles me the melody which fascinates me are graven in my memory with an intensity proportional to the keenness of my attention. But the act of perception the mechanism of my awakening attention—what trace will that have left? I was absorbed in the act of contemplation. Like Condillac's statue which had become 'the scent of a rose' I was for the moment nothing more than the light or the melody. The perceiving subject had vanished before the intensity of the perceived object, and some difficulty is experienced in observing what was passing at the moment in the subject. Thus the second phase of suggestion eludes consciousness while the first phase eludes observation.

3. There is an additional reason for our ignorance. Autosuggestion can operate upon us with incalculable power. Now if we permit this force to work spontaneously, in default of rational guidance disastrous consequences may ensue and do in fact often ensue. A large number of illnesses arise from this cause alone. Even in the case of morbid phenomena whose cause is obviously physical

\* Condillac, *Traité des sensations*, Amsterdam, Paris and London 1754.

it frequently happens among persons (and they form the enormous majority, who do not understand the mechanism of spontaneous suggestion that this force considerably aggravates the malady. But if by our own insight or with the help of others we discover that we have been the architects of our own sufferings we are extremely loath to admit so humiliating a truth. In fact we refuse to admit it and directly the discovery presses upon our consciousness there ensues what psychoanalysts have termed *repression* the phenomenon whereby we are induced to forget the very reasons which have led us to the dreaded conclusion. Thus foolish vanity is far from being exceptional. Those who protest most energetically that they know naught of it are often most completely enthralled by it and their protests are nothing more than one of the numerous artifices which the censor employs to fool the consciousness. The same remark applies to the protests of persons who declare that they have never been the victims of unfortunate autosuggestions. We have all suffered in this way and especially those who regard themselves as immune.

These three reasons suffice to explain why we have remained so completely ignorant of phenomena which concern us so deeply. In ultimate analysis every one of these reasons proves to be a manifestation of the activity of the subconscious or the unconscious. Every one of them is a manifestation of the mental activity which goes on in us without our being aware of it. They are part of the furniture of that back shop of the mind they belong to that life which goes on in the wings instead of on the stage, they are part of that world filled with a strangely vigorous activity the world in which thought and action continue during sleep. The life of this under world controls us unceasingly. It leads us at hazard so long as we lack the clues. But it discloses to us good roads—as soon as we know them well enough to choose our way. Such is the knowledge we hope to acquire in the course of the following pages.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TYPICAL EXAMPLES

BEFORE classifying the numerous examples by which we propose to demonstrate the frequency and the diversity of spontaneous autosuggestions we shall in the first instance, apart from all classification give a few examples which will best enable the reader to understand the working of suggestion and will help him to realise its leading characteristics

At the outset let us consider the well known phenomenon of *fascination*, where the attention is so completely captured by an object that the person concerned continually returns to it in spite of himself. In certain neuropathic subjects fascination displays itself in an aggravated form. But normal persons can grasp what we mean by fascination when they think of the attraction caused by a luminous point. A still better example is the auditory fascination exercised by a door banging repeatedly during the night so that we cannot help listening for the recurrence of the sound. We cock our ears as we wait for its coming, and we curse the door that keeps us awake not so much by the intensity of the noise as by the fact that we are continually on the alert.

What has happened? The first thing is the working of spontaneous attention. The isolated noise breaking the silence of the night naturally attracts the ear. Then our attention recurring again and again to this noise

\* This example and other analogous ones have been ably analysed by Paul Souriau of Nancy University. Cf. *La suggestion dans l'art* Alcan. Paris

we imagine that it is impossible for us to refrain from attending. Next, the idea materialises (here we have suggestion at work), and in fact we are no longer able to withdraw the attention. We have spontaneously suggested our own impotence.

We now make repeated efforts to release the attention from the object which fascinates it, but at each successive effort we feel that our powerlessness becomes more evident. Here is the remarkable point: the effort counteracts itself, turning to the right when it wishes to turn to the left: our effort spontaneously reverses itself in accordance with the idea which actually dominates the mind and which has become a suggestion—the idea of impotence. In a word, the more we wish, the less are we able.

We shall see later that a definite law is here in operation. The characteristics just described as attaching to spontaneous suggestion will stand out far more clearly when they have been evoked as it were to order, by means of reflective or induced suggestion. Coué and other investigators noted these characteristics first of all when they had been artificially evoked, and were subsequently able to recognise them in purely spontaneous suggestions.

From fascination we pass by an easy stage to *obsession*, which is nothing more than a mental fascination, a fascination by images, memories, ideas from which we cannot free the mind simply because we think we cannot free it, and because this thought becomes a suggestion. The *fixed idea* is only the ultimate degree of obsession. Moreover, obsession and fascination, which become more overwhelming at every effort made to dispel them, can be dispelled by a reflective autosuggestion or by an induced suggestion. (Let me say parenthetically at this stage that reflective autosuggestion and induced suggestion comprise a form of action totally distinct from voluntary effort<sup>1</sup>.)

The reader cannot guard too carefully against confounding voluntary effort with autosuggestion. We shall see that the latter is efficacious precisely in proportion as it is remote from the former.

instances they fail to do so. If the formal phrase is to have a real content we must show what ideas in actual fact are usually seen undergoing transformation into the corresponding realities. This is our immediate task.

In the representative domain the fact of suggestion can be expressed by a formula which will at first seem a strange one namely *The idea<sup>1</sup> of an idea gives birth to this idea*

As far as the motor domain is concerned we shall say *The idea of a movement gives birth to this movement*. This formula is comparatively easy to understand.

In the representative domain, we have to do with a sort of suggestion at second-hand. In this sense the matter is evidently somewhat complex. But from another outlook we are dealing with something simpler than when we enter the motor domain for is it not more elementary to see an idea undergoing transformation into an idea than to see an idea undergoing transformation into a movement or into an organic modification? In the former case we have the mind acting on itself. When we move or to study the action of the mind on the body we feel as if we had passed a stage further as if we had left the comparatively simple for the comparatively complex.

But what is the idea of an idea? Is it easy to distinguish the state I think from the state I think that I think? Spinoza<sup>2</sup> believed that the distinction could be drawn and he spoke of the idea of an idea of the idea of the idea of an idea and so on as if they were realities he had seen with his very eyes. In truth this play with abstractions is somewhat artificial. Perhaps it is a mere playing with words, and we must look at the matter more concretely.

The idea of a movement, or let us say the image of a movement can be clearly distinguished from the move-

<sup>1</sup> The term *idea* is used in the widest sense of mental representation.

<sup>2</sup> Spinoza *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*. English translation by Hale White Duckworth London 1899 p. 17

ment itself. The same thing can be affirmed of the image of any material object. Whereas the material object is visible to everyone and forms part of the system of external realities, the image of this object exists only in the mind of the person who thinks that image. You see just as I see the house at which I am looking, but you do not see the house of my thought. In contrast with the object we may say that the image is subjective.

But when the object itself is a mental state and is therefore subjective, the distinction is no longer possible. Whereas the image of an external object is not an external object and while being differentiated from the external object by this single characteristic may resemble it in all other respects—the image of a mental state, on the other hand, can be nothing but a mental state. It would seem then that we must accept one of two alternatives. Either this state image has all the characteristics of the state of which it is the image and in that case the former is not distinguishable from the latter but is the very state itself. Or else the former differs from the latter in some respect or other and then the former is not the image of the latter.

But when we reason thus we are as so often happens duped by our own dilemma. In fact even if there do not exist properly speaking images of mental states there do exist equivalents of such images and we may term them *schemata*.

We wish for example to recall a proper name. This name is a mental image. At the moment when we desire to recall it we doubtless think of this name. Yet it would be incorrect to say that we possess its image for then we should already possess the name itself. But we remember certain characteristics of the name: the number of syllables, the sound of certain letters, the initial or final consonant, the emotional atmosphere which is associated with it in our mind. We have a *schema* of the name. By the very fact that for a certain time our attention has been fixed upon this schema with the intention of filling in its details we have started something at work within



us Now while we are speaking of other things and when we no longer think of the name we require this work is continued in the subconscious Suddenly in the depth of our memory a call sounds resembling a telephone bell when the connection we have been seeking is at length established—and the name is remembered

By this example we may understand what suggestion is in the representative domain

*Amnesia* or loss of memory, may just like the revival of memories be the outcome of suggestion Among hypnotists it is a classical experiment to suggest to the subject that he has forgotten his own name But hypnotism merely exhibits in an exaggerated form phenomena which occur in the normal state and there is no essential difference between heterosuggestion and autosuggestion There are names which we know as well as we know our own name, and yet they elude us just when we want them Often enough this caprice of memory is very trying to the temper How ridiculous! we say We swear, we frown we make desperate efforts to remember—but all in vain

The failure to remember the item at the precise moment when it is wanted is due to some specific cause perhaps to some antecedent suggestion Whatever the reason since the name you want was perfectly familiar to you, you are astonished at the disobedience of your memory The failure to recall what you want the anomalous working of your brain, positively frightens you Spontaneously and unconsciously you make an autosuggestion which aggravates the amnesia And now, the greater the effort you make to remember the name, the more complete becomes the forgetfulness You have noticed this before in similar instances You are clearly aware that the harder you try to remember, the more obstinately do you forget Each successive effort seems as it were to trouble more hopelessly the waters of memory, to stir up more mud from the bottom until at length the whole pool has become turbid A moment ago, I had the name on

the tip of my tongue but now I have lost all trace of it. You had a schema in your mind you tried to fill in the outline but you feel that this very attempt has effaced the outline and you feel that the more you try, the more hopeless becomes the obliteration.

But when you have ceased to struggle when you have left your mind at rest in the hope that the recollection will turn up later then after a while the name comes back to you.

Moreover it is not only upon isolated memories that suggestion acts in this way negatively or positively. Memory as a whole may be similarly affected. In the majority of amnesias the part played by suggestion is enormous. We see this when amnesia is rapidly cured by a deliberate countersuggestion.

What then is the mechanism of such amnesias?

Let us suppose that two or three times in brief succession you have suffered from such a lapse of memory, accompanied on each occasion by more or less explicit annoyance. Then the idea takes possession of you that you are losing your memory. In actual fact now, your memory is adversely affected, simply because you think it and because your attention has thereby become concentrated upon the idea of amnesia.

In the domain of *judgments* and *opinions* the rôle of spontaneous suggestion is often disastrous.

At the outset let us clearly understand the nature of this kind of suggestion. What is the schema of opinion which undergoes transformation into a fixed opinion?

You hear an opinion stated you are well aware that it is nothing more than an opinion you have your reserves when you accept it you intend to look into the matter more closely to reason about it. At this stage you think the judgments that have been formulated without believing them in the strict sense of the term. What you have in your mind are not complete judgments, for belief is an integral part of judgment and here belief is lacking. All that you have is what we may call the 'schema' of a

judgment the idea of a judgment (or of that series of judgments which constitutes an opinion)

Time passes and you no longer think about verification. You even forget the original source of your idea. But one day you are called upon to decide the question and you discover that your mind is made up. You hold the very opinion which you heard expressed formerly although you have never had any proof. The ordinary newspaper reader, the man in-the-street, is continually circulating these hearsays without professing any credence in them. Nevertheless the newspaper reader's opinions are based upon the falsehoods he reads in his favourite paper. He does not realise it but such is the fact. The grain planted in him when he read has germinated in the subconscious. He has made up his mind and he believes that his opinion is established upon reason. The ruling class turns this law skilfully to account when it wishes to drive the human sheep of Panurge to the slaughter house.

It is a well known fact that by repeating tales to themselves and to others people come to believe what they say and are duped by their own falsehoods.

Next we pass to consider the role of suggestion in the domain of *sensation*. Let me quote some typical examples from Paul Emile Lévy's *L'Education rationnelle de la volonté*.<sup>1</sup> Lévy was a pupil of Bernheim, and his book is transitional between the earlier Nancy school and the later. He alludes to an observation made upon himself by Herbert Spencer.

'If I merely think of a slate pencil squeaking on a slate, my teeth are set on edge just as if I actually heard the sound.

Lévy refers to the familiar experience that merely to think of itching anywhere suffices to arouse the sensation of itching.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Emile Lévy, *The Rational Education of the Will*. English translation from the 9th French edition by Florence K. Bright Rider. London 1913.

Everyone knows he adds, that if we are expecting a visitor we are continually hearing the door bell ring before it really does so '

We may add that while suggestion can thus create wholly imaginary sensations (*hallucinations* in fact) still more easily and still more frequently does it give rise to partial hallucinations by transforming real sensations to make them correspond to a fixed idea. From among our real sensations we select those which conform most closely to the image pre existing in our mind. Between the sensation and the image there takes place a compromise a more or less complete identification. Thus when we are expecting a visitor above all when we are awaiting his coming with some anxiety the crackings of the wood in a piece of furniture or the blows of a hammer in the distance are mistaken by us for the sound of his footsteps on the stair.

In the visual domain hallucination in the strict sense of the word is rarer than it is in the auditory domain. The difference doubtless depends upon the fact that the image of a noise is not absolutely contradicted by the sensation of a real noise whereas a vision is often contradicted by the presence of the external objects amid which the vision seems to be situated. These objects then act as antagonistic reducers to use the term coined by Taine. I know perfectly well that two objects cannot occupy the same place at the same time whereas two noises can mingle and interpenetrate. But even though complete hallucination be rare in the visual domain, what I propose to call *hallucination by compromise* is of frequent occurrence. Phantoms make their appearance above all in the night, when the outlines of objects are comparatively hazy so that their forms are more elastic to the imagination. A pillar the white wreath of a fountain the bright space between two trees—such things constitute the material substratum of a phantom owing to the resemblance between their appearance and that of the imagined winding-sheet.

This phenomenon will be more readily understood when

we contemplate its exaggeration in the state of hypnosis. In this condition complete hallucination is by no means rare but it is interesting to note that hallucination by compromise is often preferred by the subject. The imagination instead of inventing out of whole cloth makes use of elements borrowed from real sensations. This is an economy an application of the law of least effort.

In this connection let me record an experiment of my own.

I had induced hypnosis in a boy of twelve who was extremely fond of chocolate éclairs. Giving him a plate to hold I suggested that he should see in it a chocolate éclair. Now on the plate was a reproduction of Millet's celebrated picture *The Gleaners* in which there are three female figures two bending forwards and one upright. After a second or two the boy said in high glee 'But there are three chocolate éclairs and two of them have an odd shape for they are bent in the middle. This was a well-marked instance of hallucination by compromise.

The same type of hallucination in a somewhat attenuated form is commonly manifested in the work of great poets. Real objects are modified in form by the internal visions they resemble so that the real objects seem to be materialisations of the visions. In Victor Hugo's writings such direct metaphor is exceedingly common. Let me quote one example from among many.

The poet has just encountered a flock of sheep with a girl herding them. His thoughts have agreeably loitered in retrospective contemplation of this sight. Now his path leads him to the seashore and here the surroundings seem modified to fit his reverie. Anyone who wishes fully to understand what passes in the poet's mind should (like the present writer) retrace Hugo's footsteps and read

*Pasteurs et troupeaux* in its original setting. The waves are breaking on Grouville beach. It is eventide, and the full moon is about to rise upon the sea. The outlines of the landscape are ill-defined and in the hypnotic

Lee Contemplations

atmosphere it is easy for the imagination to transfigure them Leftward the ruins of the castle of Montorgueil thrust like a human head above the promontory which juts southward into the sea at' the northern extremity of the bay The vision of the flock has lingered in the poet's mind

Down there before me the pensive old watchman  
Guarding the seafoam the tides the seaweed, the reef  
And the surges beating ceaselessly upon the shore  
The shepherd headland wearing a cap of cloud drift,  
Leaning on elbows, dreams to the murmur of all the infinities,  
And contemplates the triumphant rising of the moon  
Amid the wrathlike forms of glorious cloud  
While the darkness trembles, and the biting squall,  
Scatters to the winds with its fierce breath  
The wool of the sinister ocean sheep

Elsewhere the poet burning with indignation at the memory of an execution which continues to haunt his thoughts seeing the moon rise red and sanguine writes

I saw this severed head roll on the ground ' But the same moon one evening when he is engaged in religious meditation becomes ' a huge consecrated wafer ' Another night, when he is in a similar mood he refers to the stars as fragments of white-hot charcoal scattered from the censer of the infinite again, in a burst of lyrical enthusiasm he speaks of the stars as sparks which flash beneath the hoofs of Pegasus whilst on a night of pessimism the constellations are the marks of the prison house stamped on the world's shoulder " This enumeration could readily be prolonged

Hallucination by compromise is a good example of the law of teleology which dominates suggestion, a law to which reference has already been made in connection with neurasthenia The internal image which wishes to realise itself in the form of sensation is opposed by antagonistic reducers which are real sensations but it transforms these obstacles into aids subconsciously it chooses from among them those which it can best turn to account, those which can serve it as material and upon this material it stamps

its own impress This is obvious in Hugo's ocean sheep In the case of the white-hot charcoal from the censer and in that of the 'consecrated wafer' the process is somewhat different We cannot say that the image of the censer or that of the host existed in the poet's mind in a conscious form what he was conscious of was an affective state, the state of religious contemplation The image of the host the image of the censer etc were associated with this state in the subconscious they were preconscious were that is to say quite ready to rise to the surface the sight of a real object called them up by resemblance The case of the severed head was of a type intermediate between those just analysed The poet's mind was mastered by an affective state wherein rage and pity were combined But with this state there were intermingled images which passed one after another through consciousness the guillotine the condemned man his aspect the waiting crowd and so on Among these images was that of the severed head It had flashed through consciousness several times perhaps and when not actually present to consciousness it had remained in the preconscious intimately associated with the dominant affective state

We lay stress upon these examples for they supply an answer to an obvious objection and they are instances of the working of the remarkable law of *transference*

Suggestion is an idea which subconsciously transforms itself into the corresponding reality But in that case we shall be told, a hallucination could only be a suggestion when the subject has been expecting it when he has already had the mental image whereof the hallucination gives him a quasi-material sensation Nay more his mind must have been positively obsessed his attention must have been monopolised by this mental image Now, the majority of persons who suffer from hallucinations insist that their voices or their 'visions' take them entirely unawares, come unexpectedly out of the void startling their imagination and often producing actual dismay Here, it would seem at first sight, there can be no question

of suggestion seeing that the first of the three phases the preliminary idea of the thing realised is lacking

In exceptional instances this objection may be valid or must be admitted as a logical possibility but far more often it can be refuted by careful observation. The examples given above furnish the key for the refutation of the criticism

In the case of the severed head and still more in those of the host and of the censor it was not the mental image of these things which engrossed the attention at the outset the attention was already engrossed as it is in the origination of every suggestion. The obsession was there but it was obsession by an affective state not by an image. Nevertheless in the poet's subconsciousness the image was closely associated with this affective state (In early youth his only experience of religious contemplation had been gained in Catholic churches and in connection with the host and with censers) By the chance play of objective sensations these slumbering images so intimately related to his actual state of mind were reawakened. Thereafter everything happened as if the obsession had been transferred from the affective state to the image so closely associated with that state the image which symbolised that state so that by spontaneous suggestion the image was then realised in hallucinatory form.

This transference is a further manifestation of the teleology of the subconscious. Every state which engrosses the mind tends in one way or another to secure external expression for it is a concentrated energy which wishes to diffuse itself. Now for Victor Hugo hallucination by compromise which in him is the source of symbolical poetry is the normal method of discharge. But an affective state cannot thus be externalised. We cannot visualise religious contemplation we cannot visualise wrath. The obsession therefore is transferred. A visible object a symbol (the censor the severed head) is substituted for the unduly abstract emotional object and the suggestion then runs its course.



These examples of hallucination by compromise will enable the reader to gain a clear understanding of the process of transference which appears to be the general law governing all hallucinations of such a character. A neuropath for whom all the stones in the road become pustules, for whom every runnel of water is a loathsome issue of some morbid humour, may not be directly obsessed by such images but he is manifestly obsessed by ideas by fears of disease and of decomposition. These ideas and fears are too abstract to be externalised and they are therefore replaced by the concrete visions which are associated with them.

The law of transference is likewise in operation in the origination of certain complete hallucinations. In the preceding instances the immediate cause of the transference was to be found in the chance working of external circumstances of real sensations. But in other instances the entire process is internal. Transference has been carefully studied by the psychoanalysts and they have shown that it may result from a number of subconscious influences and above all from the working of repression.<sup>1</sup> The analysis of a case of hallucination reported by Auguste Lemaître<sup>2</sup> will enable us to understand the genesis of hallucination by repression. We see in it an example of suggestion in which both the first phase and the second phase remain in the sphere of the subconscious. But the process is none the less complete. Here is the history of the case.

Amédée was a boy of fifteen. During the Easter holidays he was in a mountain region, and after he had been there two weeks he became suddenly subject to hallucinations. He was an intelligent lad with more inclination for study than for out-of-door amusements, but for health reasons he somewhat reluctantly devoted himself to these latter for an hour or so daily. His

Cf Régis and Hesnard *Psychoanalyse des névroses et des psychoses* Alcan, Paris.

<sup>2</sup> *Archives de Psychologie* July 1916 Kundig, Geneva.

environment was one of kindness, but he was far from sharing the luxurious tastes of his family. In fact he felt himself out of place in these surroundings. The commonplaceness of everyday life even when richly gilded had for a year past since he had begun to think filled him with aversion. He had grown more and more depressed. During the above mentioned visit to the mountains when his parents said to him 'You'd much better go out tobogganing instead of frowsting over your books!' this remonstrance caused him a violent internal shock. His own words to me were 'They used to treat me as if I were an imbecile they said I looked like a lunatic or an embryo philosopher. And all because during the evenings in the hotel I did not want to dance or to play the fool with the others.'

In Amédée's family there was no history of neuropathic taint except that one of his uncles had been a sleep walker. The patient himself, when about twelve years of age, had on two or three occasions walked in his sleep.

'The hallucinations as I have said began towards the close of his stay in the mountain resort. Both the visual and the auditory hallucinations had a characteristic which caused him great astonishment they were *fragmented*

Here is his own account of them. Often, while at work or while talking with someone I suddenly cease to see the persons with whom I am conversing and the other objects around me. I am plunged into a dream or vision. Frequently I see a woman who is tall and elegantly formed, dressed in white seated at a table and leaning on one elbow. On the table there is a lighted lamp. She is looking out of the window, and is patting a dog which has no hair and no legs. Of this woman I see only the head and arms and the upper part of the trunk, and lower down the crossed legs.

"As a rule the hallucination affects him in the evening. On May 8th at 6 30 p m, I felt a hand stroking my cheek and it seemed to me that I must be going mad. On May 13th at about 7 30 p m I saw a woman who had

no arms and who was turning her head from side to side

The history refers to other hallucinations which we need not describe for the report is not sufficiently detailed to enable us to make a satisfactory analysis. All these hallucinations were fragmented from the utterance of the voices certain words were missing moreover the author lays stress on the hours at which the phenomena occurred (4 30 6 30 7 30)—the very times were not integers. His inference is that all these hallucinations related to the sentiment of incompleteness with which the lad was affected. They symbolised this feeling which was transferred to the symbolic images.

But the few hallucinations which we have selected from among all those recorded in the clinical history enable us to undertake a more exhaustive study employing the psychoanalytic method.

The patient's age and the nature of the visions combine to show that their cause was deeply rooted in the domain of sex. Moreover in the boy's detestation of luxurious living of dancing etc. psychoanalysis discloses to us the results of a repression of sexual matters.<sup>1</sup> He refuses to admit the existence within him of certain desires. The very images habitually associated with these desires are repressed by the endopsychic censor and it is to these associated images that the affective obsession is transferred. Note more particularly that in the visions the more significant portions of the body are systematically suppressed. All this work of substitution has been effected in the subconscious. The upper consciousness is unaware of what has been going on in the depths, it is astonished and sometimes alarmed at the results of the process.

Hallucinatory suggestion (except hallucination by compromise) is rare in adults. But in children it is fairly common.

I can myself recall having seen, in childhood a vision

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bandoun, *Psychoanalyse Observation No. 2* Archives de Psychologie 1916 Kundig, Geneva.

of bells flying through the air ringing as they flew. It was on the Saturday before Easter and these bells were bringing from Rome the greatly desired Easter eggs.

George Sand and Carl Spitteler have recorded memories of childhood displaying analogous phenomena more or less strongly marked. It is probable that as we become more intimately acquainted with the psychic life of children we shall discover that spontaneous suggestions of this kind are far from rare.

Finally an idea may not only induce sensation it may also inhibit sensation. Thus a person suffering from a severe cold being no longer able to perceive a faint odour will imagine that the sense of smell has been totally lost and will in actual fact be unable to smell anything.

## AFFECTIVE SUGGESTIONS

## (SENSATIONS EMOTIONS THE PERIPHERAL THEORY OF EMOTION)

As we pass from the representative sphere to the affective sphere sensations provide us with a natural stepping stone. As a general rule sensations are simultaneously affective and representative. Certain sensations of heat and cold and to a still greater degree certain visceral sensations are often attended with pain which may preponderate very markedly over the representative element.

*The idea of a sensation of pleasure or pain the idea of a feeling tends to become this pleasure this pain or this feeling*

Here again we have to point out that such an idea is rather a schema than an image properly so called. When we think of a pain we feel (unless our representation be purely verbal) a sort of reduced copy of the pain as if we had only just experienced it and as if a faint trace of it a vague emotional echo of it still remained. The vividness of this echo varies in different persons. There are some who directly they hear any physical suffering spoken of promptly display upon their faces the customary signs of pain. The forehead becomes furrowed the corners of the mouth are spasmodically raised. This implies that one who thinks of a pain begins to feel it has already a rough sketch of it in his sensorium. If now the attention becomes unduly concentrated upon this sketch, this schema or if the attention returns to it too often, suggestion is unleashed. The same considerations apply to every kind of affective state.

As far as visceral sensations are concerned Herbert Parkyn, in his excellent manual of autosuggestion<sup>1</sup> records the following incident. It has its amusing side, so that it sticks in the memory.

A New York visitor in Chicago looks at his watch, which is set an hour ahead of Chicago time and tells a Chicago friend that it is twelve o'clock. The Chicago friend not considering the difference in time between Chicago and New York, tells the New Yorker that he is hungry and that he must go to lunch. Twelve o'clock is the Chicago man's regular lunch hour, and the mere mention of twelve o'clock is sufficient to arouse his appetite' (pp 11-12).

Suggestion may also act negatively. Bernheim maintains that in fasting men the sensation of hunger is neutralised by an idea.

Phenomena of this character occur in connection with all kinds of sensation.

Parkyn reminds us that a man after touching some article of clothing may be told that it has been worn by someone suffering from skin disease. The subject thereupon has itching sensations all over the body and fancies he has caught the disease. Again medical students who study the symptoms of various diseases frequently exhibit these symptoms and imagine themselves to suffer from the diseases in question. Facts of this order are quite familiar. The pamphlets, leaflets and advertisements issued by the vendors of patent medicines vaunting specifics for all and sundry diseases whose symptoms are described with a wealth of detail are responsible for an enormous amount of suffering.

Paul Emile Lévy lays great stress upon negative suggestions those which inhibit sensation and he is right for the deliberate use of suggestions of this character is most valuable in promoting the relief of various painful symptoms. Here is an instance given by this author<sup>2</sup>.

"The following fact came under my observation. A patient complained of a severe pain, the sequel of a

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Parkyn Auto-Suggestion, Fowler London 1916. <sup>2</sup> Op cit.

violent blow on the chest His temperature was taken with a clinical thermometer and when the instrument was withdrawn he said That has eased me greatly Other authors have recorded precisely similar occurrences Many martyrs have endured torture with a serenity of spirit which they assure us they were able to maintain without the smallest difficulty Their attention was monopolised by the beatific visions with which their ecstatic minds were filled so that they were unaware of physical suffering

The painful sensation of cold (which is simultaneously representative and affective) may be to a large extent neutralised by suggestion On the other hand, it may be greatly intensified by the same cause

A resident in Nancy one who has since learned to make good use of autosuggestion reported to me the following incident

'When I got out of bed one morning the window was wide open and the sun was shining brightly The mere sight of the sun made me feel cheerful and warm I put on very light clothing and went about my business with bare arms and nevertheless felt a great deal warmer than I had felt during the last few days Then I went to the window and saw that it had been snowing A glance at the thermometer convinced me that the winter had set in Immediately I felt cold, my teeth chattered and I began to shiver'

Thus the sun had induced the idea of warmth and had even sufficed to arouse the sensation of warmth, or at least to neutralise the sensation of cold But the sight of the snow in conjunction with the reading of the thermometer aroused the idea of cold and the sensation of cold promptly ensued

Everyone knows, though not everyone fully realises, how the sight of a fire which has just been lighted and which has not yet begun to throw out any heat will make us feel warm, thanks to the idea of heat which it arouses by a natural association In a child, the memory of having suffered greatly from cold one day in the previous

winter will arouse a dread of winter and all the more if in answer to the child's question 'What is winter?' we have foolishly answered 'Winter is the season when we suffer from cold.' Such a child will be a chilly mortal throughout life or at least until he has realised that he has been the victim of suggestion. It may be that some countersuggestion like the amulet or talisman in a fairy tale will deliver him from his thralldom. In like manner one who has never before been sensitive to cold, will become so during a fever and will remain so after the fever when the exciting cause of the chilliness has vanished. Similar factors are at work in the case of persons who declare they cannot endure heat.

The sensation of weight and the fatigue that accompanies it and also the fatigue which comes from walking or from any other form of exercise are the sport of unceasing suggestions. This is particularly noticeable in the case of children. If when you are out walking with a child you are so heedless as to say you are tired it is ten to one that the child will say 'So am I,' and will immediately begin to flag and to fall behind. But in this respect we grown ups resemble children much more than we are apt to fancy. A peasant carrying a basket on his back will stoop under its weight although he has unwittingly dropped the contents on the road. When during a walk of two or three miles we are dull and imagine ourselves to have traversed double the distance we are correspondingly fatigued. But the reverse is equally true and this latter fact is susceptible of the most valuable practical applications.

As far as concerns physical pain in general suggestion will sometimes intensify it and will sometimes act as an anæsthetic. Coué gives the following familiar instance.

'Consider, for example a little child. He has pinched his finger or scratched his hand. Instinctively he begins to cry, for the pain is more or less sharp. His mother runs to him, blows on his hand, rubs the sore place gently, tells him it is all over now and that it doesn't hurt any



more Thereupon the child stops crying and begins to smile Wherefore? The child hears his mother say It doesn't hurt now His unconscious believes it He imagines that there is no more pain and actually he ceases to feel the pain

But if the mother greatly alarmed exclaims Poor little darling how you have hurt yourself! the child redoubles his outcries In this case likewise the child's unconscious believes the mother's words The idea that the suffering is great increases the suffering

The reader may object that this example and also that of the child which gets tired on hearing someone else complain of being tired have nothing to do with the subject under discussion seeing that they are heterosuggestions But comparison with the adjoining instances will show that the parent's words act only by way of the child's imagination and become suggestions only after they have been accepted by the child

Besides in this case as well we may say that we grown-ups are more childlike than we suppose We shall learn that suggestion consciously utilised by the adult may become a potent anæsthetic But so long as we remain ignorant of this our trouble is that we are just as credulous as any child, with the difference that we are credulous in a bad sense while the child is credulous in a good sense He believes that his mother's blowing on the sore place eases the pain, and inasmuch as he believes it it is true. For our part we believe that we can only get relief by having recourse to a pharmaceutical arsenal and as long as we believe this as long as we remain ignorant of the power possessed by the brain over the rest of the organism, so long does our belief remain true so long are we unable to do without the arsenal But per se, our negative superstition is a trifle more fallacious than the positive superstition of the child

It suffices for us to imagine ourselves poisoned by fungi thereupon we are seized with violent colic In this and in similar cases, we manifestly encounter two important

factors of suggestion *emotion* (fear in the instance just given) and *attention*. The latter is sustained to the pitch of obsession and is kept up by emotion.

But *emotion* (the acute affective state) is not merely a factor of suggestion not merely an auxiliary in the production of suggestions. It may in its turn be the object of a suggestion and the idea of an emotion frequently gives rise to this emotion.

Nothing predisposes to fear like the conviction that we shall be afraid and above all the conviction that we shall be afraid in certain specific conditions. Nothing predisposes to anger like the memory of a previous occasion when our anger passed beyond our control and the more or less conscious realisation that the same thing will inevitably happen should the same conditions recur.

But the idea the schema of an emotion is not necessarily a purely internal state. In contradistinction to what occurs in the case of movements which are externalised phenomena although their image is purely mental it frequently happens that emotion an internal state, has external objects for its image its schema. I refer to the physical signs which are the habitual accompaniments of emotion which are its expression and which arouse it. Those who see in another the signs of fear those who discern in their companions pallor of the face a terror stricken look in the eyes a trembling of the limbs those who hear others stammer with fright or who in a crowd hear the panic stricken cry 'All's lost every man for himself' —are not slow to become affected with the highly contagious emotion of fear. Thus the collective fear which we term panic rapidly spreads through an assembly an army a country.

According to what is known as the *peripheral theory of the emotions*, which derives from Lange and William James it is an error to believe that emotion secures expression through physical signs. These psychologists hold on the contrary that the physical signs are the actual cause of the emotion. We ought not they contend,

to say We weep because we are sad we tremble because we are afraid we clench our fists because we are angry We ought to say We are sad because we weep we are afraid because we tremble and so on Were this theory sound the foregoing suggestion would have to be classed not as an emotional suggestion, but as a motor suggestion The sight of the movements which express fear in others would have suggested analogous movements to the subject and these movements by a natural sequence would then have aroused in him the emotion which is invariably associated with such movements

Against this interpretation it may be objected that as a rule the motor suggestions induced by the sight of others' movements do not operate with the requisite degree of intensity If we imitate the movements of persons who are afraid why do not we likewise imitate the contortions of acrobats persons whom we usually watch with close attention? Does not the difference show clearly that in the production of fear there is some other influence at work? It is true that those who accept the views of William James might reply as follows The sight of the movements expressive of fear suggests at the outset the same movements to us in an infinitesimal manner, as in the case of all movements which we witness But in this case the beginnings of movement at the periphery involve the beginnings of the emotion of fear This emotion like all others, makes suggestion more active and redoubles the intensity of the movements these in turn increase the intensity of the emotion and so on. It is as if we had to do with a self-starting self-exciting dynamo, the current and the magnification mutually increase one another and both speedily attain to a maximum

There is some force in the answer Moreover, it is true that there are other facts still within the field of suggestion which seem to speak in favour of James's theory For example the most potent method of overcoming fear by induced suggestion would appear to be

for the suggester to direct his attention not to the fear itself but to the accompanying movements

A boy of twelve had from earliest childhood evinced a positive phobia of toads. Whenever he caught sight of one his face grew pale his back became arched and he made convulsive movements with the forearms. This phobia had originated in imitation of his mother who had similarly derived it imitatively from her mother. Ascending through the generations the symptoms were more violent. The grandmother had a severe nervous paroxysm at the sight of a toad falling convulsed to the ground. In her case too the trouble came by imitation. Her mother in a deathbed delirium witnessed by the daughter had been affected with the hallucination that toads were crawling all over her body. In treating the boy I dealt with the motor symptoms saying "You will no longer arch your back at sight of a toad etc." After three sittings at which these suggestions were made in the waking state the phobia had disappeared. It seemed as if by stopping the movements expressive of fear I had actually dealt with the cause of the fear.

But the opponents of the peripheral theory will not admit defeat. They can raise two valid objections.

1 We know that suggestion acts through teleology we know that when the end is proposed the subconscious finds means for the attainment of this end discovers methods for its realisation. The emotion therefore can perfectly well be the cause of the movements.\*

2 The case given as an example shows that the phobia was the outcome of imitation was derived from a suggestion aroused by the sight of the movements expressive of fear. In an emotion suggested in this manner it is quite possible that the movements in question play a preponderant part but it does not follow that all emotions are explicable in the same way.

\* The reader is referred to the example given at the beginning of Chapter VIII Part I (the law of subconscious teleology) where an affective state (astonishment) is used as a means for realising a motor suggestion (the crossing of the arms).

To sum up, the phenomena of suggestion have not, as yet enabled us to solve the problem definitively. But we shall clear the issues if we juxtapose the problem of the *emotions* with the problem of *affective sensations* which has already been studied.

Emotion which in greater or less degree always underlies joy or sorrow is obviously a phenomenon belonging to the same psychological category as affective sensation—for instance the painful sensation of weight of fatigue or of cold.

Now when we study affective sensations we perceive that their motor accompaniments play a secondary part and cannot be considered as their cause. On the other hand these sensations can be suggested just as emotions can be suggested by external things which symbolise them by external things which are not always movements. To shrivel up at the thought of cold to utter a guttural 'grrr!' are excellent ways of making oneself feel chilly when it is really quite warm. The practice of muffling oneself up is a no less efficacious means for even before we hamper the circulation by this practice we thus arouse the idea that the cold is a terrible enemy is a sort of polar bear from which we must protect ourselves by elaborate special equipment. Winter rigged out and solemnised in this manner exercises upon our minds a suggestion analogous to that which Pascal discerned in the ceremonial robes of the doctors and of all the high dignitaries of his day. Nevertheless, the sensation of cold is not *caused* by these trappings, nor yet by our shrinking from the cold and by the chattering of our teeth. The thermic sense is modelled after the same manner as the other senses. We should be wrong to imagine that the sensations of heat and cold differ fundamentally in the way they function from the sensations of sight and hearing which latter are obviously not the outcome of any bodily movements. But it is perfectly true that the movements we make when we shrivel up or curl up from

This gesture an ancestral heritage appears to be the vestige of an effective means of defence against cold. But in the conditions under

cold the movements we make when our teeth chatter being intimately associated with the sensation of cold, prolonging and expressing that sensation arouse it and tend to suggest it, or to amplify it by suggestion if it already exists

By analogy we may infer with a high degree of probability that the same is true of the emotions that it is true of fear for example I cannot think that fear in its essential nature is caused by the motor disturbances which are its accompaniments<sup>1</sup> But as soon as these disturbances begin they suggest to us the fear they symbolise This gives a plausible foundation for the peripheral theory and there can be no doubt that a large part of the emotion we feel is caused by suggestions of this character Herein we discover additional proof of the important role of suggestion in such cases

This role need not surprise us As we have repeatedly had occasion to recognise emotion favours and powerfully reinforces suggestion Now when the object of suggestion is emotion itself this emotion which we do not begin to feel until we think about it is nevertheless present from the outset in an attenuated form, and endures throughout the motor process It never ceases to render the motor process more active Suggestion here is in a peculiarly favourable position

What we have just said concerning the role of motor expression in the suggestion of such emotions as fear and anger, and in the suggestion of such a sensation as cold, enables us at this stage to formulate a practical rule In the case of fear or anger we should repress the movements characteristic of these emotions and should cultivate physical impassibility In the case of cold we should adopt an upright and offensive attitude, instead of a curled up and defensive or shivery attitude we should do this directly we begin to feel and even before we begin

which we now live, it is unmeaning, and serves only to suggest the sensation of cold

<sup>1</sup> The emotion remains peripheral, in this sense, that it usually originates in external sensations.

to feel cold. In view of the power of suggestion in this field such a veto imposed at the outset upon an impending suggestion is of greater importance than anyone could imagine who had not made personal trial of the method :

: Concerning the suggestion of emotions by their motor expression Pierre Bovet writes as follows (*L'instinct combatif* Déclachaux and Niestlé Neuchâtel 1917) "Emotion spreads by inducing the imitative reproduction of the gestures which express emotion. This enables us to understand why emotion spreads more readily in proportion as it is more violent and why a crowd so readily becomes affected with a paroxysm of emotion."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### AFFECTIVE SUGGESTIONS

(continued)

(SENTIMENTS TENDENCIES PASSIONS)

SUGGESTION also plays a great part in the life of *sentiment*. By its nature sentiment is akin to emotion being differentiated therefrom by its less abrupt and comparatively stable character. Sentiment is more inward than emotion physical changes are less in evidence consequently, it is easier to feign a sentiment like love or hate than to feign an emotion like anger.

A sentiment, like an image is characteristically internal. As in the case of the image therefore it is peculiarly true that the idea of a sentiment is already the sentiment. This applies even more fully to sentiments than to images (at any rate to visual and auditory images which are the chief images). The mental image of an object seen or of a word heard is in fact, susceptible of analysis into parts. Thus the idea of an image may be conceived as consisting of certain salient parts of the image whereas other parts are wanting this is what we have termed a schema. But the notion of fragmentation must not be taken too literally. The simplification which leads to the formation of the schema resembles the simplification that occurs in the view of an object when we see it from a greater distance. It is as if as we move away the object loses one detail after another.<sup>1</sup> The idea or schema of an image differs from that image as the object seen at a

<sup>1</sup> Bergson's analysis has shown how artificial is our conception of mental phenomena as fragmented as atomised.



distance differs from the same object viewed close at hand. Many of the details are somewhat blurred only in the case of a few salient details are the outlines still discernible. Thus in the case of a person's name we referred to the sound of certain consonants to the number of the letters etc. as elements making up the schema. The schema differs from the complete image in that certain of the constituent parts of the image are lacking in the schema.

In the case of the sentiment there is a difference. The sentiment is synthetic if we explain it if we analyse it it loses thereby its primary essence. If we reason about love we destroy love, writes Tolstoi. Speaking generally the application to sentiment of intellectual processes (which are by nature analytical) is destructive to sentiment. For sentiment is non analytical it is not made up of parts it is an indivisible whole and you have to take it or leave it. It follows that the idea of a sentiment cannot be the partial revival of the sentiment. The difference between the sentiment and the idea of the sentiment cannot be a difference of kind it can merely be a difference of degree of intensity.

This implies that when we think of a sentiment we do in the strict sense of the term begin to feel it.

In these conditions suggestion is exceptionally easy. When the idea of a sentiment lingers in the mind when our attention continually recurs to it, we may look upon our idea as a command as a prophecy and it is probable that in the end the sentiment will manifest itself in full vigour. The fact that we call it up indicates that it is already there. We are reminded of the profound saying of Pascal. You would not have sought me had you not already found me.

Nevertheless it is by insensible degrees that we pass from emotion to sentiment. Despite its inwardness a sentiment is accompanied by physical disturbance, which is less conspicuous than that which accompanies emotion but is no less real. This disturbance, likewise, is externalised in gesture and in speech.

It is a commonplace to say that to give expression to a sentiment above all to a painful sentiment is a relief. The term expression here partially regains its literal sense. When we squeeze a wet sponge we express water from it we get rid of the excess. Some go so far as to declare that sentiment can destroy itself through securing expression. Goethe tells us that by writing *Werther* he freed himself from a suicidal impulse. In truth however there is something more at work here than the mere fact of expression. There is an imaginary gratification of desire analogous to the satisfaction that our repressed impulses secure in dreams. (The writer of *Werther* affected with a suicidal impulse killed himself in imagination.) When the expression of a sentiment gives relief, a similar mechanism may often be at work.

I have known persons who when morally wounded by another, immediately responded by invective and insult (sometimes in all seriousness and sometimes in a tone of assumed pleasantry, but through which anger breathed). They declared that did they fail to give vent to their feelings they would bottle something up and they did not wish to retain any rancour towards one dear to them. Here again the rancour has been discharged through finding indirect satisfaction through securing a derivative.

It may also be contended that the expression of a moral smart gives relief, not per se but through the satisfaction it gives us to gain a hearing and to find sympathisers.

Possibly again when a sentiment reaches paroxysmal intensity its expression is a discharge of tension, as when Ariadne bewails Theseus and proclaims her woes to the winds and the waves or as when Victor Hugo declaims to the waves on the Jersey coast his anger towards and his hatred for the man of the Second of December<sup>1</sup>.

In these cases too however, I believe that what gives relief is not the mere fact of expression but the discharge, the indirect satisfaction. We address things and animals while personifying them imagining for the moment that they can understand us. Except for the poetic terminology,

<sup>1</sup> 1851: the coup d'état of Louis Napoleon.—TRANSLATORS NOTE.

Ariadne does not differ essentially from the old maid who confides in her cat thus gratifying her need for sympathy Victor Hugo sublimates his rancour and his desire for vengeance He writes *Les Châtiments*, since he cannot and indeed would not chastise in reality Ariadne having lost the object of her love substitutes the sea for this object In like manner Hugo substitutes the sea for the object of his hatred

Besides gloomy ocean I hate thee.\*

In a word it would seem that the fact of expression does not in itself constitute the discharge but that it acts in virtue of some external cause which is intermingled with the expression (sympathy derivation)

On the other hand the expression of a sentiment like the expression of an emotion seems to be by its very nature eminently suggestive, not merely for others but for the subject himself According to Pascal one who takes holy water and makes the sign of the cross will not fail in the end to become a believer

We shall discuss later the role of art but we may enquire here whether it be not the function of art to suggest sentiments by giving them expression Furthermore (conversely with what happened in the case of the author of *Werther*) it is obvious that in many instances the artist intensifies his own sentiment by the mere fact of expressing it A poem is begun in a comparatively indifferent emotional state but by the time he reaches the third or fourth stanza the writer's eyes are moist Sometimes the opening stanzas will merely have served to suggest a livelier sentiment to the author, and in the final revision of the poem they will be suppressed because they seem weak and spiritless in comparison with those that follow—although they paved the way for these The musician's

\* A classical instance of transferred emotion The sea is associated in his mind with the prison ships on which those condemned after the coup d'état were transported to Cayenne The sea has become the accomplice the handmaiden, of the detested ruler and is therefore substituted for him as the object of hate.

prelude the painter's study have a similar preparatory role. Sometimes when the work of expression is finished it comes to exercise the strongest suggestive power on the writer.

There are verses of mine which I wrote without weeping  
Yet now on rereading they move me to tears

We are told that Nietzsche rereading his own *Zarathustra* was so strongly moved that he was unable to finish the book.

The domain of art furnishes us with other examples of spontaneous suggestion. I refer to the suggestions which control public appreciation whether favourable or unfavourable. People are guided by the critics by fashion by the comments of the catalogue they glance at in front of every picture to learn what they ought to feel about it. Quite common is a horror of anything that is new in style a dislike for any work that has not been consecrated as a masterpiece. But when this consecration has taken place, people will admire with a fervour equal to that with which they have previously despised. In others we observe a tendency to rush after every novelty a fondness for the ultrafuturist. Thus some find a work beautiful and touching in proportion as it is in conformity with the established canons and is like everything else whilst others admire a work and are moved by it in proportion as it is unlike everything else. And apart from a few humbugs the public is in either case perfectly sincere.

There have been epidemics of despair epidemics of suicide. But another thing which shows clearly the extent to which sentiments are spread by suggestion and the way in which they affect human collectivities is the existence of a typical sentimentalism in each epoch. When a sentiment is genuinely original when it is the true reflection of the individual's personal reactions it naturally differs in persons of different temperaments. On the other hand to-day no less than in former times similar varieties of temperament must exist, and these must react in similar ways. But human beings living in intimate association react in an almost uniform manner and the

general manifestations of sentiment differ from age to age. Romanticism was a collective crisis—it dominated sentiment for many years and then gave place to a new type of feeling. Such phenomena are not wholly explicable by historical happenings or by changes in social conditions. We must rather say that the sensibility of one person or of a few arouses widespread suggestive imitation and that has often been pointed out that the whole romanticist movement existed by anticipation in Rousseau. In like manner the sensibility of our own epoch in certain circles at least is the outcome of strong doses of Nietzschean suggestion—more or less distorted. We do not allege that everything can be explained by suggestion. We merely wish to reveal its presence and to demonstrate its power. Why is one model chosen in preference to another? The reasons for such a preference are doubtless complex but as far as the present argument is concerned the important point is that people do choose a model and imitate that model without fully realising that they are doing so. As Bernheim phrased it: Suggestion is not everything but in everything there is an element of suggestion.

From sentiments we naturally pass to *tendencies* which under the form of tastes, inclinations and passions constitute as Ribot has shown the mainspring of the affective life and form the ultimate foundation of the sentiments themselves.

There are a few primordial tendencies, and the function of the chief of these is to favour the preservation of the individual or the species. Suggestion plays its part, sometimes in inhibiting these primitive tendencies but more often in accentuating them. It also promotes the development of secondary tendencies grafted upon the primary ones.

The instinct of self preservation is displayed in a number of tendencies the chief of which is the nutritive impulse. We have seen that this impulse is inhibited in fasting men. But sometimes it is accentuated by suggestion. A person was told one day that his appetite was immoderate

and that he must certainly have a tapeworm aware henceforward of the voracity of the imaginary tapeworm his consumption of food already twice that of an ordinary mortal was now fourfold

In this field an example of secondary tendencies is furnished by the preferences we show for certain foods and the dislike we feel for others. Some of these tastes are natural manifestations of individual temperament but most of them are simply due to suggestion and are all the more imperious on that account. The subject declares he cannot overcome his like or his dislike and he is in fact enslaved by it precisely in proportion to the degree to which he believes himself enslaved—but no more. He can't bear the smell of a particular spice and yet he will go into ecstasies over the flavour of a sauce containing this very spice when he does not know it is one of the ingredients.

How do we form our tastes as a rule? Let us remember, first of all that we generally form them in early childhood the preeminently suggestible age when we see flying bells (see pp 54 55) and when our mother's breath will cure a pain. Just as in the case of the boy in whom a terror of toads was aroused by imitation it will be enough for a child to see an adult showing disgust for any article of diet. Henceforward the child will likewise find it disgusting. Children, moreover, incline to like everything that those whom they are fond of like. But if you are in a child's black books he will detest whatever you say whatever you do, and whatever you like. A child is in the sulks and does not want to eat his soup, if now you unfortunately say that the soup is good the child who is at odds with you, interprets your saying by contraries, and may even take a permanent dislike to that particular soup.

These remarks do not apply to alimentary tastes alone. Carl Spitteler in his *Premiers souvenirs*, writes as follows concerning a picture he possessed in childhood.

"Among the animals I was particularly fond of the spotted hyena, whereas I had an unmeasured contempt for the striped hyena. The cassowary was one of my favour

ites I greatly preferred it to the ostrich for I considered that the latter bird suffered from overweening vanity. These sentiments were the outcome of my caprice. You are always talking about the striped hyena and that is a good reason for my passion for the spotted hyena. Everyone insists upon the importance of the ostrich. Well to me it seems a stupid bird and my heart goes out to the cassowary which you despise.

Unlike Carl Spitteler most of us are unable to remember the origin of our tastes and we therefore believe them to be innate and ineradicable. Nevertheless some of our tastes do not even date from childhood and yet their origin is suggestive. After too hearty a dinner or one day when our stomach is a little out of order we eat for dessert something we have always liked. Henceforward we find it unpalatable. We think our taste has altered and from this date it has in fact altered. When we partake of a dish that is new to us our attitude towards it is usually determined by similar reasons and promptly the dish is classed among those we like or among those we dislike. Nay more there are some who know beforehand that they will not like this or that. Naturally these are among the prophecies that bring their own fulfilment. Above all will this ensue if others at table have insisted on the prophet's tasting the undesired food for then his vanity and obstinacy come into play. With tastes as with opinions, adverse discussion strengthens them.

It is well known finally, that the far-fetched names with which, in restaurants commonplace dishes are christened, have a powerful influence in promoting gustatory satisfaction.

There are certain perverse impulses, derived from the nutritive impulse and developed by suggestion. These range from coprophagia or the impulse to eat excrement to drunkenness, which is scarcely less disgusting. To this subject we shall return.

When a tendency becomes greatly accentuated we speak of it as a *passion*. This is exclusive, it occupies the

entire being it is an affective obsession and suggestion plays the part that it plays in all obsessions. Before it we are *passive* we are astounded at our own weakness and this makes us yet weaker and yet more passive.

Passion has been compared to a fixed idea. Charles Renouvier has thoughtfully termed it mental vertigo. In any case when we wish to compare passion with other psychological phenomena it is the phenomena of suggestion which present themselves to the mind. In the struggle against passion we once more recognise the futility of effort when this effort is directed in a sense opposed to that of the dominant obsession. The stronger the effort the less effective it is. As soon as we have realised this fatality the vertigo becomes accentuated it is as if we had to do with a falling body which traverses distances proportional to the squares of the times occupied since the beginning of the fall. It is only the first step which is difficult. Thereafter the rapid fall seems to carry us away. That is why one must not trifle with love.

To express a sentiment one does not feel is not always to lie for he who expresses a sentiment begins to feel it. And by reiterating the expression of the sentiment one may inflame it to a passion. Like the liar who ends by believing his own falsehoods we are caught in our own snare. By talking of love says Pascal: we fall in love. 'Tis the easiest thing in the world. And later he writes 'One can hardly feign love without being very near to being in love or at least to being in love somewhere for this simulation is not possible without having the mind and the thoughts of love. It is always the same principle.

You would not have sought me had you not already found me.

Whatever may have been the primary origin of a passion we may affirm that its most conspicuous character that from which its name is derived its *passivity* (or rather our passivity in relation to it) is considerably intensified by spontaneous suggestion.

Furthermore the very origin of the passion is in most

\* Discours sur les passions de l'amour



cases an imitative suggestion. Like the well-to-do idler who studies his own symptoms until he succeeds in discovering in himself indications of all the ills that flesh is heir to, the adolescent giving free rein to his wandering thoughts discovers in himself the symptoms of the passion of which he has read so many descriptions. The schoolboy recalls the great passions he has studied, that of Phèdre, that of Venus, wholly devoted to running down her quarry. The girl in the convent school impersonates herself as the heroine of some idyll written for such readers as herself; she is the Clara d'Ellébeuse whose old-fashioned and false idealism arouses the ironical amusement of Francis James. The little servant maid enjoying her first experience of town life sees everything in the light thrown by sixpenny sensational novels. The street arab's views on life and passion are derived from the cinemas which allure him by the presentation of figures superhuman in stature but subhuman in soul. The cinemas whose perverse suggestions are a social danger to-day. Each lad and each lass suggests to himself or to herself the form of passion which has presented itself to his or her imagination. Each is stamped often for life with the imprint of these early suggestions.

'Great passion' wrote Brunetière is as rare as great genius. As a rule in fact passion is a mere imitation, an unconscious counterfeit. Religious passions (as in the sixteenth century), patriotic passions (as to-day), flourish by crises by epidemics. There is a passion of the century just as there is the comet of a season just as there is the latest craze or the fashionable dish. Unfortunately, the fashionable dish is often spiced with poison.

This discloses the enormous part played by spontaneous suggestion in the affective life. Do you mean to imply, the objector will exclaim, that all our sentiments all our tastes all our passions or nearly all are illusory? We foresee that the preceding pages will at first leave this

Clara d'Ellébeuse is a heroine of insipid romance of the type known as romans pour jeunes filles. Such books were favourite school prizes in the fifties of the last century.—TRANSLATORS' NOTE.

impression but it is a false impression. It arises from the fact that the starting-point of suggestion is imaginative and that we are apt to look upon the imagination as the faculty of illusions as the mistress of errors. This is one aspect of imagination but it is not the only aspect. If we deliberately confound suggestion and illusion we do so precisely because we ignore the great power of suggestion a power which it is our present business to realise. We shall see clearly in the sequel that this power is creative that it brings into existence the most tangible realities such as bodily modifications. But when we think the matter over carefully we recognise that this creative power is equally manifest in affective suggestion.

The outcome of suggestion may be a state which is in certain respects illusory as for example when judgments of things are in question. A true judgment must conform to the external reality to which it relates. Its truth contains an objective element. If I suggest to myself that the earth is square and end by believing it to be square, it is true that I believe it, but it does not follow that the earth really is square, for I am the victim of illusion. A sentiment, on the other hand is purely subjective. Its whole reality is in itself and in us. When I think that I suffer I do really suffer there are no imaginary ills, if by imaginary we mean illusory. A sentiment a passion, may be the result of suggestion but they are none the less real. Their essence is to be felt and felt they are. Therein lies their full reality. Suggestion has veritably created something, for it has given life to a self sufficient entity.

When a cause which we regard as insignificant brings into existence an effect which we know to be considerable we must not allow ourselves to depreciate the effect because of our estimate of the cause. On the contrary we must revise our estimate of the cause and recognise its high potency.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ACTIVE OR MOTOR SUGGESTIONS

(HABITS MEDIUMISTIC PHENOMENA SAYINGS AND  
DOINGS HAPPENINGS)

IN the tendency we have the natural stepping-stone from the affective life to the active life. Every tendency desires to externalise itself in action. This brings us to the domain of motor phenomena where suggestion is expressed by the schematic formula

The idea of a movement gives birth to this movement

In practice moreover we have as a rule to do not with a single movement but with a whole series of movements organised upon a teleological and synthetic principle

In the last chapter we referred to the perverse tendency known as drunkenness. This tendency is not fully developed unless it culminates in the act of drinking. Nay more we can only speak of a passion for drink when the acts leading to intoxication are frequently repeated so that we have more or less to do with a habit. As with every habit the same thing happens as when a piece of cloth takes a fold. The frequent repetition of the action facilitates the particular motor discharge. One who has drunk often, will go on drinking. Now we do not wish to assimilate habit to suggestion. We must continue to employ the word suggestion in the restricted sense we have given to it. Nevertheless if habit be not identical with suggestion, the latter is terribly potent in promoting the acquirement of the former. Above all, in the case of drinking for instance suggestion tends to impress upon the practice that irresistible and "passionate"

character which is typical of what we term drunkenness. The patient because he has already yielded to his craving fears that he will yield once more and this contributes to his repeated falls. The more often his better will has been frustrated in the past the less his power of resistance in the future. Furthermore the state of intoxication like that of reverie is a state wherein mental control is slackened wherein the subconscious dominates the mind. Now as we shall show later such a state is peculiarly favourable to suggestion. The images which are impressed upon the mind under such conditions have every chance of bearing fruit and since in this case the images are those of drinking bouts of glasses filled and drained, images associated with a feeling of enjoyment we may say that every drinking bout is a suggestion of future intoxication. In addition as always happens in cases of this kind effort has a purely negative result and this contributes increasingly to depress the subject.

An analogous process is at work in the passion for opium or morphine, in that for ether and in that for tobacco. All of these in varying degree are likewise sustained by the state of intoxication which the various narcotics induce or to speak more strictly, by the autosuggestion which the state of intoxication facilitates.

The same considerations apply to the abuse of the sexual instinct whether in normal heterosexual intercourse or in masturbation.

All these bad habits, from the most serious ones like kleptomania, to the most trifling like nail biting, are sustained and aggravated by spontaneous autosuggestion. It has frequently been pointed out that bad habits are much more easily contracted than good ones. This should suffice, I think to prove that in the former case suggestion is at work. For the difference is that in the case of the bad habits we usually wish to strive against them and this as always happens with suggestion is an infallible method for engulfing us more hopelessly in the quicksand. Despite the aphorism 'who wills can' we have to do here with cases wherein effort is invariably

self defeated eventuating always in the opposite of what is desired. This happens because the idea the suggestion of powerlessness dominates the mind and because the effort will always be transformed in the sense of the dominant idea.

Those under the rule of passion from lovers who desire to be free from the thralldom of love to drunkards who long to be free from the thralldom of drink have in all ages derided the vanity of effort. When in every variety of tone they are assured that who wills can they feel that they are not understood and they turn away shrugging their shoulders. They are perfectly right. It is another cure that they need and what the cure is we shall learn in due course.

In the sphere of movement suggestion by imitation is common. Immoderate laughter readily spreads through a crowd yawning is contagious. If we associate with a person suffering from a habitual nervous movement we are apt to acquire it ourselves. The rhythmical gait of our companion on a walk leads us insensibly to keep step with him.

During a conversation we discover that our hand holding a pencil is engaged in writing mechanically as we say i.e. subconsciously some phrase which was uttered several minutes before or it is drawing some object which has been within our range of vision but which we do not even remember having noticed. The auditory image of the words heard, the visual image of the object seen have been transformed into movement. For such images are motor images. Painters without being consciously metaphorical speak of the movement of a line and in like manner musicians speak of the movement of a melody. This is not the place to explain the physiological grounds for the complex nature of the images in question. Suffice it to point out that a motor image evoked by a visual or auditory image with which it constitutes a united whole has stimulated the brain, in the subconscious it has then been transformed into a

real movement or rather into a complicated series of intelligent and coordinated movements

We have had occasion to refer to hallucinations which astonish the subject because their cause is unperceived and which are nevertheless suggestions whose first phase has been subconscious. We even come across cases of subconscious [automatic] writing which is the outcome neither of the words of a recent conversation nor yet of any series of images actually present to the senses or of recent occurrence. Still as Flournoy has well shown in many of these cases the process can be reconstructed and we then learn that here also we have to do with a suggestion of which the first phase (the verbal motor image) is subconscious. The hand writes phrases which the subject has not foreseen which astonish him which conflict with his conscious tastes and his conscious ideas and which none the less emanate from the depths of his being. Many cases in which we might have been inclined to suspect 'mediumism' i.e. the operation of a mind other than that of the subject thus prove reducible to manifestations of spontaneous autosuggestion.

The phenomena of table turning likewise are in many instances reducible by analysis to suggestions of this order. Often enough the results of table-turning bring us back to the elementary case of the pencil which traces a word that has just been heard or sketches an object actually in the field of vision. Take for example the following record made by a good observer actually present at the séance.

We are seated at the table our hands resting on it form a chain for a time nothing happens. Suddenly one of the legs of the table rises, beats out nine strokes at regular intervals and then all is quiet again. Not until some time later do more complex phenomena begin. A moment after the nine strokes have been made I glance at the clock, quite by chance, and I see that it has just struck nine.

Apparently the auditory image of the nine strokes of the clock occurring in a profound silence and when the

minds of the sitters were passive was able in the void as it were freely to develop its motor accompaniments. The associated motor images were transformed into movement in the auditors or at least in the most sensitive among the auditors (the medium) by the instrumentality of the hands the subconscious movement was transmitted to the table.

This shows us in passing how much caution is requisite in the study of spiritualistic phenomena. Their analysis is exceptionally difficult seeing that the greater part of the process is subconscious. But I am of opinion that the methods of psychoanalysis (as applied to the fragmented hallucinations of the lad Amédée) can throw much light on such phenomena, for the primary object of psychoanalysis is by indirect means to open a way into the subconscious. Amédée's hallucination is closely analogous to the phenomena to which allusion has just been made the difference being that in the latter case the suggestion was motor whereas in Amédée the suggestion was representative.

A spiritualistic séance is extremely favourable to the working of spontaneous suggestion and this for three reasons. In the first place a condition of mental relaxation is imposed upon the participants. Secondly, an emotional state is invariably aroused by approximation to the mysterious. Thirdly there exists an expectation that remarkable things will happen.

Spontaneous suggestion manifests itself, not merely in the production of trifling movements but also in the initiation of complicated actions. It takes effect not only in the formation of isolated habits but likewise in its influence upon character which is a bundle of mental habits.

More or less unconscious actions due to involuntary imitation are of frequent occurrence. We have the poor sheep of Panurge and we have heroic charges on the battlefield. In the latter case the intoxication of the firing of the clamour and sometimes of alcohol systematically distributed, induce the requisite hypnoid state.

In a cavalry charge the horses are subject to it no less than the men

In so far as imitation is not fully conscious and deliberate it is invariably a manifestation of suggestion. The child in most cases has no idea why he chooses to play one game or another but the idea is implanted in his mind by imitation. He does what he has seen others do though he has sometimes forgotten having seen them.

A year or two ago I carved a device on a tree  
The tree has made it its own and thinks that it improvises.

We all resemble that tree. And like the tree between one year and the next we have grown the device the imprint let us say the image graven upon our minds has grown likewise in the subconscious. A slight trace made upon our life in childhood will in later days become a deep impression. We tend to act as we have seen others act above all when the model has been forgotten. So long as we still remember our model we know that we are imitating when we do as the model did. We know that the action does not emanate from ourselves and before doing it we supervise the intention and discuss it. But when the model has been submerged in the subconscious we imitate while thinking we improvise and we no longer discuss. Or if we do discuss, the subconscious, teleological as ever provides us with all kinds of excellent reasons for doing what it wishes us to do when the only real reason is the presence in the subconscious of an image or a system of images which the conscious mind knows nothing of.

Psychoanalysis though a very recent development has already clearly revealed the action of suggestions which date from early childhood their action upon the subject's whole life upon his character upon his innocuous or dangerous manias. It is no longer possible to doubt that for most of us the choice of a career is determined by infantile suggestions which are often masked by the

\* Cf. Bovet, *L'instinct combattif*—the chapter on the part played by example.  
\* Victor Hugo



operation of the strange law of transference but which are none the less discoverable. Furthermore these are not simply motor suggestions for with them are mingled affective elements. We tend to imitate what we like or what we admire. The dazzling epauletts of an indulgent uncle will twenty years later lead the nephew to embrace a military career believing it to be 'in the blood'. An only child whose parents are elderly and who have retired from active life will perhaps know no other world than that of the school and will perhaps admire no other dignity than that of the schoolmaster, these circumstances determine his choice of a profession but after he has himself become a schoolmaster he is greatly astonished when psychoanalysis reveals to him the real reasons for his adoption of this 'calling'.

Psychoanalysis has clearly demonstrated that the phenomena and doings of everyday life the utterances made in the most casual conversation are powerful revealers of what quite unknown to the subject is going on in the subconscious. These phenomena these doings, these utterances are a clue to all that is most vigorously censored to all that is hidden in the abysses of the mind in especial are they this when they are least subject to our conscious supervision. Régis and Hesnard<sup>1</sup> give a number of examples taken from the various authors who originated this method.

A well bred man enters a room and greets everyone politely with one exception which is quite unconscious. Now the person overlooked is the son of a man of business who has refused the newcomer's services as commission agent.

'Here are other examples mistaking the hour of the train in a journey taken unwillingly losing a present given by a friend with whom one has quarrelled forgetting the name of a friend whose image is associated in our mind with that of someone whom we dislike the involuntary spoiling of an object when we should like to replace it

by a new one. In the same category come involuntary exclamations blunders made from absence of mind and the saying of yes for no when our real thought is in opposition with what we wish to say. During a psychoanalysis where sexual errors are in question to play with a money box may reveal a habit of masturbation. Every gesture of the patient under examination must be carefully noted for every gesture may be a significant symptom.<sup>1</sup>

'Undesirable actions of a very grave character may be the work of the unconscious. Freud believes that in many cases death from accident rashness mistake etc., is in reality an involuntary suicide dependent upon a complex.'<sup>2</sup>

This proves that our ordinary sayings and doings are intimately related to our subconscious and continually betray its thoughts. If we compare the censorship to a dam which retains a mass of mental material within the subconscious we may say that spiritualistic manifestations and hallucinations like those of Amédée are the result of sudden breaches in this dam the outcome of irruptions from the subconscious into the conscious. But the before mentioned casual everyday sayings and doings are the expression of the continual escape of surplus energy from the subconscious by way of the channels provided for normal overflow. If this be so (and psychoanalysis proves that it is so) we may infer that suggestions in the second phase of their activity, having accumulated in the subconscious must unceasingly utilise this means of escape in order to secure fulfilment. Since their action is teleological and since to them all means are good which promote the attainment of the goal we can foresee that from moment to moment they will inspire in us the movements the actions and the words which tend towards the

When collated with the results of other psychoanalytic methods (the study of dreams, reminiscences etc.) Thus only can chance coincidences be excluded.

It is possible that the death of Verhaeren the great Belgian poet was of this character. He was killed by a train in Rouen station. Again and again he had sung the horror and the beauty of railway trains in language which reveals a very profound complex.

ends in view which favour realisation.<sup>1</sup> Henceforward everything must happen as if suggestion were in command of events. When we set out to do something with the preconceived idea or with the fear that we shall be unable to do it everything will happen as if we were trying not to succeed. Unwittingly to ourselves our dominant idea will inspire all the savings and all the doings that are necessary to counteract our ostensible purpose. Nay more in virtue of the law to which we have frequently referred the stronger the efforts we make for success the more unmistakably shall we favour failure. And thus it goes throughout life.

A posteriori experience teaches that things happen just as we have described. American writers are fully convinced of the fact by direct and practical observation of social life.

Emerson the great pioneer in preaching the gospel of moral energy wrote as follows in days when the doctrine of suggestion was still unknown.

He [man] thinks his fate alien because the copula [between person and event] is hidden. But the soul contains the event that shall befall it for the event is only the actualisation of its thoughts and what we pray to ourselves for is always granted. The event is the print of your form. It fits you like your skin. A man will see his character emitted in the events that seem to meet but which exude from and accompany him. Events expand with the character.<sup>2</sup>

By recent American writers this idea has been developed into a veritable system.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If the subconscious as other facts suggest is in possession of knowledge and of memories unknown by the conscious self we can be sure that the subconscious will display remarkable sagacity in the choice of means of this character. Extraordinarily accurate realisations will ensue.

<sup>2</sup> Emerson *The Conduct of Life* Chapter I Fate Riverside Edition Routledge London, 1883 pp 43 and 45.

<sup>3</sup> These authors who often wander into the region of mysticism have founded a school which is transitional between the first Nancy school and the New Nancy School.

Orison Swett Marden in his highly figurative language writes as follows

To be ambitious for wealth and yet always expecting to be poor to be always doubting your ability to get what you long for is like trying to reach east by travelling west There is no philosophy which will help a man to succeed when he is always doubting his ability to do so and thus attracting failure

You will go in the direction in which you face

There is a saying that every time the sheep bleats it loses a mouthful of hay Every time you allow yourself to complain of your lot to say I am poor I can never do what others do I shall never be rich I have not the ability that others have I am a failure luck is against me you are laying up so much trouble for yourself

No matter how hard you may work for success if your thought is saturated with the fear of failure it will kill your efforts neutralise your endeavours and make success impossible \*

Herbert Parkyn explains these phenomena as follows

You may dislike a person but for reasons politic you determine not to show your dislike You may even go out of your way in an endeavour to make yourself agreeable to the object of your dislike still in some way or other a coldness will spring up between you and the dislike becomes mutual and may end in an open rupture without either person being able to explain how the dislike was uncovered The explanation is simple Thought takes form in action and the dislike will so influence your actions that you will betray yourself by a look or a nudge or some other unconscious slight The action may be wholly involuntary or unconscious on your part and it may be just as unconsciously noticed on the part of the other person but his involuntary mind takes cognizance of the action the seed of discord is sown in his mind also and the damage is done

O. S. Marden *The Miracle of Right Thought* Rider London, 1913, pp 46-8.

Similarly you may cherish a strong desire to go somewhere to do something or to possess something. You may not deem your desire reasonable nor within the realm of possibility at the time but your actions, conversations and decisions will be influenced by this desire in various ways. Although it may take years for you to gratify your desire still that desire is usually gratified by the opening up of ways and means and this opening up although it may appear accidental is nine times out of ten the direct result of actions unconsciously performed through the promptings of your desire.<sup>1</sup>

Strictly speaking however these phenomena might be regarded as no more than coincidences and the above explanation might be looked upon as nothing better than a plausible hypothesis. But as soon as we compare them with the precise interpretations of psychoanalysis, the gap is filled and the doubt vanishes.

We now understand how our own mental attitude leads to success or failure. We grasp the secret of luck good or bad and we realise why those who believe in their fortunate or unfortunate star are rarely given the lie by the facts. This fatality exists but it is internal and not external just as the fatality of a habit or a passion is internal when we wish to overcome it but are unable to do so. We hold the key to this determinism. As soon as we know how to make use of the key we escape from the dominance of fate we win freedom. Our star is in ourselves and upon ourselves does it depend whether the star is lucky or unlucky.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. pp 113 114.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MOTOR SUGGESTIONS

*(continued)*

#### (FUNCTIONAL AND ORGANIC MODIFICATIONS MATERNAL IMPRESSIONS CURES)

ALL the motor suggestions hitherto considered are related to movements which can be carried out under the full control of the conscious self. Suggestion here does no more than follow the path trodden by the will. In many instances identical phenomena can be voluntarily reproduced. We may feign to yawn the actress who plays the part of Juliet's nurse learns to laugh immoderately. In the case of mediumistic phenomena (automatic writing for instance) the subject may cheat.

There are however other motor autosuggestions which act on muscles that are not subject to the control of the conscious will the muscles which regulate (or fail to regulate) the visceral functions. The same remark applies to those imperceptible movements on which the most profound organic modifications depend. Suggestions of this category methodically applied in the form of reflective or induced suggestions constitute the basis of psychotherapeutics of a system of psychotherapy characterised by extreme potency compared with which all that has hitherto been effected by ordinary hypnotic suggestion will soon appear to have been of a very elementary order. Indeed to those who have closely followed the latest acquirements of the New Nancy School it is already plain that ordinary hypnotism represents merely the infantile stage of the art of psychotherapeutics.

In all ages unofficial healers have obtained remarkable results in cases where orthodox medical skill has failed. This gives cause for thought. How do these healers effect their cures? They do not directly apply suggestion as ordinarily understood but they are backed by a great reputation due to chance or to legend people believe in them and they make use of fantastic methods whose strangeness and illogicality arouse a sense of 'the marvellous' producing in the patient an emotional state which facilitates the working of autosuggestion. In these conditions faith cures.

We have no right to deny the reality of 'animal magnetism' or to deny the curative effects of 'absent treatment' but there can be no question that many of the cures attributed to animal magnetism or to 'absent treatment' are in truth the outcome of spontaneous autosuggestion.

Coué has proved this over and over again. Telling a patient that he will think of him every evening at a fixed hour, he requests the sick man to collect his thoughts at the specified time and to put himself in mental rapport with his doctor. The value of the treatment he is told will speedily become apparent. The patient obeys orders. At the appointed hour Coué is gardening or fishing. Nevertheless, after a few 'sittings' a cure ensues. Sometimes it deserves to be called a 'miraculous' cure.

At the outset of his studies, Coué tells me he noted the cure of an extremely refractory illness, when the patient, on his advice, took a new patent medicine. Greatly astonished at the result he analysed the medicine, and found that it was a harmless compost, whose whole value was based upon skilful puffery—and above all as he learned in the sequel upon the involuntary eloquence with which he himself had advised the use of the remedy and upon the patient's confidence in him and his word. Hence germinated in his mind the idea that suggestive treatment might prove valuable in organic maladies. This idea was to be independently confirmed by the work of Bonjour, of Lausanne.

Warts are peculiarly responsive to autosuggestion and it was to warts in this connection that Bonjour first devoted his attention. In the Swiss canton of Vaud curers of warts abound and here it sometimes happens that the patient will employ a famous prescription without troubling to consult the healer. In these cases auto suggestion is seen in all its beauty. Prescriptions pass from village to village and from hamlet to hamlet. Some of them are incredibly quaint. For example to cause warts the subject goes out one evening moistens the tip of the finger looks at a star and simultaneously applies the wet finger tip to the other hand. The operation is repeated the finger being freshly moistened with saliva each time while the subject counts one two three up to the number of warts desired. Now wherever the moistened finger tip has been applied a wart duly appears. I do not guarantee the alleged numerical precision but the development of warts as a sequel of such practices is a proved fact. The Vaudois girls are very fond of this amusement—not for the mere pleasure of having warts (for the pleasure of their possession is certainly open to dispute) but for a pleasure which to them is very real and very great, the pleasure of passing them on to someone else. A ribbon is tied round the affected hand, and is knotted as many times as there are warts on the hand then the ribbon is dropped on the highway. Whoever picks it up and unties the knots will get the warts and the original owner of the warts will be cured. Another prescription equally efficacious is to rub the warts with a piece of bacon rind which is subsequently placed beneath a stone on damp ground. As soon as the bacon rind is rotten, the warts will be cured. But if by bad luck someone moves the stone, one has wasted one's pains and one's bacon rind and one must begin all over again.

In the same canton persons suffering from dropsy are cured by lying on two mattresses between which some toads have been placed.

The value of such methods depends upon their illogicality their strangeness, which strikes the imagination of the



Analogous phenomena though less marked for the most part are observed in connection with a great many births. We are no longer entitled to attribute them to mere coincidence. We must rather hold that nothing more is requisite to produce them than an abnormal or exceptionally sensitive temperament. Once more it is the task of psychoanalysis to verify the hypothesis that a large proportion of the stigmata wrongly ascribed to heredity are really due to fear to a superstition regarding heredity that exists in the mother's mind. The high degree to which the mechanism of childbirth can be influenced by the activity of the brain (a sensibility proved by the instances previously recorded) compels us to believe that when a pregnant woman is obsessed by the idea that her child will display some parental stigma the chances are considerable that this will actually happen. When suggestion is better understood and when a knowledge of suggestion has been more widely diffused the superstition of heredity as disseminated by nineteenth century science and as taught by Zola in his novels will receive a deadly blow—not indeed as regards the primary principles of the theory but as regards many of its premature applications. For there are three kinds of suggestion which reinforce one another in the simulation of heredity: first of all there is suggestion acting on the foetus; secondly there is the imitative suggestion which is one of the laws of the development of the child; and lastly in the adult there is the superstition that heredity is "inexorable"—a superstition no less erroneous than the belief in miraculous cures and just as disastrous as the latter is often beneficent.

In like manner psychoanalysis will doubtless verify with increasing frequency the hypothesis that many miscarriages and many difficult deliveries are chiefly due to maternal autosuggestion. The starting point in these cases may be a fear of such occurrences cooperating with an unavowed anticipatory hatred of the expected child, or it may be some other repressed wish of which the conscious ego knows nothing such as the desire that the birth of a living child shall not take place; this desire

being the outcome of a more or less unacknowledged hatred of the father transferred without the knowledge of the subject to the coming infant. But the fear of difficult delivery seems to be the commonest cause of such troubles. I have noted the following instance in the course of a psychoanalysis.

A young woman, mother of a child of seven, had since the birth of this child suffered from nervous troubles which her doctors had several times declared to be amenable to psychoanalytic treatment. I began in accordance with the usual method by asking her to tell me of some dream recent or otherwise which had particularly struck her. Unhesitatingly she described a dream dating from seven years before and in the course of the conversation she spontaneously told me that it had happened during her pregnancy. It must have made a profound impression on her mind, seeing that the memory was so vivid and so promptly recounted. Moreover, there could be little doubt that the dream was directly related to the pregnancy.

In the dream she was at the town hall. The mayor was away and the patient's husband was acting as his deputy. A stranger suddenly appeared, a man of crafty and disagreeable aspect. He was a foreigner, apparently of Hungarian or Italian extraction, and he wanted the authorisation necessary for residence in Switzerland. Her husband begged the stranger to await the mayor's return, but the man grew impatient, brandished a dagger, chased the husband into the street and wounded him. The young woman now found herself at the window, looking down anxiously into the street where this was happening. The mayor appeared beneath the window, saying to her: 'Nothing serious will happen as long as you don't come down, be careful and everything will be all right.' Then she saw her husband lying in a bed which was the replica of her own. He had a bleeding wound in the forehead.

Examining the patient by the association test, I now discovered that the mayor resembled the doctor who was attending her during her pregnancy, so that in her dream

the mayor symbolised the doctor this explained the advice given towards the end. In like manner the foreigner was the coming child the intruder\*. The dagger and the wound symbolised the pains and the bleeding associated with the childbirth she so greatly dreaded. By symmetrical transference the wound was transferred to the father to the father's *jorehead* the site of the wound being a characteristic instance of the working of the endopsychic censor. To sum up the young woman had an intense and all pervading dread of the ordeal she had to endure she anticipated disaster. Her fears were realised. The expected stranger was born before the doctor arrived and the mother had a serious flooding.

This dream discloses a mental condition extremely favourable to the working of suggestion the vividness with which it was remembered showed that the patient's attention was acutely concentrated on her experiences and the distressing nightmare proved the existence of an emotional state. We have here a further instance in which the first phase of suggestion was subconscious was repressed so that (as in the hallucinations of the lad Amedee) by symbolism alone was it revealed to the consciousness of the subject.

I give another experience of psychoanalysis.

A young woman whose first marriage had been extremely unhappy was looking forward to a second marriage in which she hoped to find happiness. From the moment when this new prospect opened menstrual irregularities from which she had formerly suffered but from which she had long been free reappeared. The analysis showed that the promised destiny seemed to her too beautiful so that she could not believe it would ever be fulfilled. She dreaded that some obstacle would intervene and above all that her health would stand in the way this fear tended to realise itself through autosuggestion. But the analysis disclosing the cause of the trouble promptly neutralised it.

\* This stranger had to cross a frontier before entering her world like the Hungarian or the Italian who comes to Switzerland.

A simulation of pregnancy may result from suggestion. Pierre Janet has observed an instance of it in a hypnotised subject. The condition was due to an autosuggestion grafted on a suggestion made by the operator.

I suggest to Rose that we are not in 1888 but in 1886 and that the month is April. My object is merely to note the modifications of sensation that may ensue. The result is remarkable. She groans, complains of fatigue of inability to walk. Why, what's the matter with you? — Oh, nothing, it's natural to my condition. — What do you mean? What condition? She replies by a gesture pointing to her abdomen which has suddenly become distended by an attack of hysterical tympanites. Unwittingly I have brought her back by suggestion into a period when she was pregnant.\*

Furthermore suggestions of this character may arise in the normal waking state. A woman who dreads being pregnant may present all the signs of pregnancy, deceiving herself in the matter; or, if she has never been pregnant, she may present what she imagines to be the signs of pregnancy.

Louis Renon† has endeavoured to ascertain the part played by spontaneous suggestion in the treatment of chronic pulmonary tuberculosis. A careful interpretation of statistics has enabled him to present precise numerical results, so that his inferences have a solidity which is always lacking in a purely narrative record. His conclusions therefore are worth recording in full.

A comparison of the results obtained by the various methods of antitubercular treatment shows that these results are practically identical in all cases. Whatever the treatment, there is the same percentage of improvements, the same percentage of cures, the same percentage of arrests, the same percentage of cases in which the patient grows worse. Laumonier, my colleague and a fellow member of the Therapeutical Society, showed a

\* Pierre Janet, *L'automatisme psychologique*, Paris, 1889.

† *Le monde médical*, January 15, 1914; *Bulletin Ecole de Nancy*, 1914.

few years ago that in four different methods of treatment the percentage of cases cured or alleviated ranged from 65% to 71% while the percentage of cases in which there was no improvement or in which the patient grew worse ranged from 29% to 35%. There is always the same proportion of satisfactory results whatever method of treatment is employed. I have described this proportion as the normal coefficient of amelioration and I have formulated the following principle:

Every new method for the treatment of chronic tuberculosis provided that it is harmless will give satisfactory results.

Here we have an absolutely true axiom. I should like to see it stamped in large letters on the cover of every new work upon phthisiotherapeutics for unless it be taken into account, the accurate appraisement of anti-tubercular medication becomes difficult or impossible. Before we can venture to say that a method of treating tuberculosis is valuable the treatment must have been in operation for a period exceeding that of the normal coefficient of amelioration which is as a rule about three weeks, the treatment must have stood the test of time it must have been applied to the same patient by different physicians it must have unquestionable experimental value. Then only are we justified in asserting that the remedy is genuinely antitubercular.

Why is there this normal coefficient of amelioration? The matter is quite simple. Whenever a method of treatment is recommended by a doctor who believes in the value of his own advice there ensues in the sufferer from chronic tuberculosis a psychotherapeutic state a state tending to promote cure. This state is the same whatever the nature of the treatment. The patient accepts the suggestions of his medical adviser and the particular medication is no more than the vehicle of suggestion.

Albert Mathieu in a paper which throws much light on the general problems of therapeutics has recorded the influence upon tubercular patients in hospital of

the hypodermic injection of cubic centimetre doses of physiological serum which is given the imposing name of antiphymosis. The patient is told that the serum in question is a new and most valuable discovery and after his mind has been prepared in this way an injection is administered daily for five or six days. The cases were carefully selected and the results were accurately noted day by day. They surpassed all expectation. Within a few days appetite returned, there was less cough, less expectoration, there were fewer night sweats, there was even an improvement in the pulmonary physical signs, there was an increase in weight ranging from three to six pounds. But all the old signs and symptoms recurred immediately when the injections were discontinued.

Tubercular patients, writes Mathieu, gain vitality directly anything is done for them, their courage rises and hope is reborn.

The most renowned phthisiotherapeutists are those who have great personal influence over their patients, those who have thoroughly entered into the patient's mind and feelings, those who as it were hold the patient in the hollow of their hand, those who guide the patient in accordance with the latest principles of the struggle against tuberculosis and have grasped all the resources available for that struggle, those who can reinforce their medication with a strong dose of suggestion.

Further examples might be given but they would teach nothing more concerning the causes and effects of motor suggestion. Anyone who desires picturesque illustrations of its laws should turn to a remarkable work by Duchatel and Warcollier entitled *Les miracles de la volonté*.<sup>1</sup> From the scientific point of view the writers' methods of exposition are not invariably above reproach. Nevertheless Boirac, a man of science and philosopher of established reputation, has thought fit with good reason to contribute a preface. For in spite of dubious theories and hasty

<sup>1</sup> Durville Paris

conclusions the book displays considerable learning and has indisputable evidential value. It contains abundant records derived from the writings of distinguished observers of our own day and of earlier days. It is a storehouse and we need merely open the door. Phenomena of this character reported as isolated incidents always have the aspect of anomalous freaks. We advance a step by bringing them together in a collection.

Let us first consider the cases of *dermographism* in which an image existing in the subject's mind becomes outlined on the skin. The authors make a passing reference to the witches of the middle ages upon whose backs it is asserted the word Satan was inscribed. They pass to a contemporary and precise report quoted from Charles Richet. A mother is watching her child at play. Accidentally the child unfastens the catch suspending a heavy sliding door in front of the fireplace and is in danger of being guillotined. The mother's heart leaps to her mouth and then in a moment there forms round her neck—the threatened part in the child—a raised erythematous circle, a weal which endures for several hours. Here we have a striking instance of the power of emotion. Another case is that of a little girl upon whose skin appears the answer to the sum she is trying to do. In this instance the image which gave rise to the suggestion was subconscious.

From *dermographism* we pass to *stigmatisation*, the latter being merely a variety of the former. Stigmata appear on the skin of certain mystically inclined persons appear in the places where Christ was wounded. These phenomena can be reproduced experimentally. As regards spontaneous stigmatisation we are not solely dependent on the account of semi-legendary figures in remote antiquity; accurate observations have been made upon modern stigmatists like Louise Lateau and Catherine Emmerich with sphygmographic tracings and other precise details. In the case of Catherine Emmerich the circulation was directly controlled by autosuggestion, the blood being distributed as it would have been distributed in an actual crucifixion.

Next in the world of Islam we read of the ordeal by fire of the devotee whose hand is not burned by the hot iron and we read of the ordeal by sword which will not draw blood. The authors give a number of instances in which obstinate maladies were cured by spontaneous autosuggestion the outcome of some novel and striking method of treatment. Of exceptional interest is a quotation from Cabanès professor at the university of Liège. This dates from 1912.

The book is fascinating and is full of matter. We unhesitatingly refer our readers to it though we are far from endorsing all the author's interpretations. We must moreover call attention to the misleading character of the title. Instead of speaking of the miracles of the will Duchatel and Warcollier should (with O. S. Marden) have referred to the miracles of thought. Failing this they should have made it perfectly clear that the will of which they write corresponds to what Schopenhauer termed the unconscious will so that the subject has the impression that what happens takes place outside the domain of *his* will by a purely spontaneous process.

The most extraordinary among the suggestions recorded in *Les miracles de la volonté* differ only by their extremely picturesque character from those which have been analysed in the preceding pages. In fact they do not imply any profounder changes in the organism. It would be an error to look upon them as in essence manifestations of an exceptional or morbid temperament. We need not go to religious devotees or to persons suffering from grave hysteria when we are looking for instances in which suggestion leads to organic modifications. We shall realise this more clearly when day after day we have seen such organic modifications produced to order as the outcome of reflective or induced suggestion.\*

\* To this series of examples we might add those of suggestion which kills. A nun whose case was noted by Coné was confined to bed by illness during the winter. She heard or imagined she heard her doctor murmur. She won't outlive April. This idea became fixed in her



In conclusion we have to note that there is no radical difference between the action of suggestion when its results are purely functional and its action when its results are organic. If we admit that suggestion can act in the former cases (and this has long been admitted) there need be no difficulty about acknowledging the reality of its action in the latter cases. For certain persons of pseudo scientific mind persons who regard as incomprehensible everything which disturbs their habits of thought the organic effects of suggestion are inadmissible until they have seen these effects experimentally verified—and even thereafter. Such persons are extremely illogical. They admit that suggestion acts on the circulation on the secretions and in a localised fashion upon various parts of the body doing this through the intermediation of the vasomotor nerves. Now let us suppose that the vasomotor mechanism stimulates or restricts the circulation through the capillaries supplying some particular group of cells and that this action is *persistent*. Thereupon the cells of this group will as the case may be enjoy an excess of nourishment or will be insufficiently supplied. They will prosper like parasites or they will atrophy. The suggestive action which manifests itself in the case of tumours local malformations etc. can be very simply explained on these lines without having recourse to any laws other than those with which we are already familiar.

mind. Nevertheless for the time being she got better left her bed and seemed quite strong again. But to every visitor she said shaking her head that she felt sure she would die in April. On April 1st her appetite disappeared as if by magic. A few days later she took to her bed once more and died shortly before the end of the month.

Tolstoi in his later years declared that the number 7 was fatal to him. On November 7 1905 in his Readings for Every Day of the Year he gives a number of thoughts on death. On November 7 1910 (O.S.) he died after a few days illness although his condition had not seemed grave.

Recall further the case of the man sentenced to death who was told he was to perish as the victim of a scientific experiment. A harmless prick was made in each of his limbs a tap was turned on in the room and he was told the water running was his blood flowing from the wounds believing this, he died.

See finally Freud's opinion (quoted on page 85) that death may be caused by a subconscious complex.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

WE have finished the analytical exposition of the phenomena classified in the scheme we drew up at the beginning of Chapter III we have discussed representative suggestions affective suggestions and active or motor suggestions

A special chapter must now be devoted to what may be termed *conditional autosuggestions* the autosuggestions which are the realisations of an idea that may be formulated as follows Every time that so and so happens so and so will follow

Practitioners of hypnotism have long been familiar with posthypnotic suggestion Having induced sleep they order the subject to do some fantastic thing after he has awakened or they tell him to come back in a week or a fortnight The subject obeys the suggestion without knowing why for he thinks he is actuated by his own will and finds excellent reasons for what he does The means employed by the subconscious teleology for the justification of the act are often remarkably subtle A young man to whom I had suggested that on awaking he should assume the traditional Napoleonic attitude with the arms folded on the chest began when awakened, by expressing his astonishment at all the phenomena which had just taken place His surprise became more and more intense until at last exclaiming 'Look here this is a bit too thick !' he folded his arms in an appropriate pose Now the astonishment vanished with crossed arms he stood in statuesque immobility behold Napoleon !

The gestures of astonishment had been the justificatory means. The subconscious had utilised astonishment the subject's actual state of mind and had modified it in the direction of the suggestion which was to be realised. This is in a sense analogous to what takes place in hallucination by compromise.

Posthypnotic suggestion may take a conditional form. We may command the hypnotised subject to have this or that idea to execute this or that gesture whenever this that or the other happens. By this method we may make the patient remember the draught he has to take every time he sits down to a meal.

But such posthypnotic suggestions are in most cases valid for a brief period only. As the interval increases as the impression received during the induced sleep gradually fades they become inefficacious.

Nevertheless there also exist *conditional spontaneous autosuggestions* and these may remain in force for an indefinite period until they are inhibited by a counter suggestion. They may last for years for an entire lifetime. This is strongly confirmatory of our thesis that autosuggestion is in reality the type of all suggestion that hypnotic heterosuggestion is no more than a reproduction of autosuggestion a reproduction that is often attenuated fragile and unstable<sup>\*</sup>.

If hypnotic heterosuggestion was the first form of suggestion to attract attention, this is because the idea which forms its starting point, though forgotten by the subject is clearly remembered by the physician. The hypnotiser in fact being aware that he was making an experiment, noted all that happened with great care. Moreover the number of the ideas proposed by him to the subject was strictly limited they constituted a few

<sup>\*</sup> In Auguste Forel's opinion, curative heterosuggestion is durable in two cases only first, when there is no reason why the material cause of the trouble should recur and secondly when the heterosuggestion perpetuates itself in the subject as a habit and as an autosuggestion. It is obvious that Forel was a precursor in expounding the theory of autosuggestion brought forward in the present work.

shining points upon a dark background consequently they were easy to remember

On the other hand the ideas from which our spontaneous autosuggestions are derived are lost amid the vast swarm of incidents that fill the busy life of our consciousness Nay more as we have seen our consciousness is quite ignorant of some of them Take further into account the effects of repression (to which we referred at the outset) and it will be easy to understand why hypnotic heterosuggestion though infinitely less important than spontaneous autosuggestion was the first to be discovered

Confirmation of the foregoing is furnished by the following examples which Coué has gleaned for me from his vast experience The proof that we are concerned with pure conditional autosuggestions with phenomena that are not determined by any organic lesion whatever is given by the fact that in every case the trouble disappeared IMMEDIATELY after a single countersuggestion This was the criterion by which Coué was guided in the choice of his examples

Case 1 —Madame N of Nancy travelling from Nancy to Sainte Menehould to visit her son became ill when the train was passing through Troyes and vomited repeatedly Henceforward EVERY TIME she made the same journey she was again attacked by vomiting while passing through Troyes (Cure after one sitting)

Case 2 —For six months a young girl had lost the use of her right hand EVERY TIME she tried to take hold of anything a contracture of the hand took place the spasm passing off directly she discontinued the attempt to use the hand (Cure after a single sitting)

Case 3 —A young man eighteen years of age living near Nancy had a hysteroid crisis EVERY morning directly he got out of bed (Cure after a single sitting kept under observation for a long time no relapse)

Case 4 —I give this in Coué's own words ' Z, of Troyes a man of about forty suffering from heart liver, and kidney troubles, had been confined to his room for more than a

year bedridden for the most part. One day five months before I was first consulted the patient was seized at five o'clock with a violent paroxysm of dyspnoea and imagined from moment to moment that he was dying. Various remedies used by his doctor failed to give relief and the crisis continued until half past nine in the evening. Next day towards half past four the patient said to his wife that the paroxysm would shortly recur and in fact when the clock struck five the dyspnoea returned in full force passing through exactly the same phases as before and subsiding at half past nine. Henceforward the crises recurred daily WITHOUT EXCEPTION for five months. When the man's wife came to see me and told me the history of his sufferings I assured her that in my opinion it would not be difficult to cure him of the paroxysms for it was obvious to my mind that they were unconsciously induced by the patient himself. I begged her to bring him to my consulting room next day at two. He arrived at the appointed hour in a carriage. Several other patients were present. I asked Z to take a seat and to watch what was going on. I would attend to him. I said when I had done with the others. Having put my patients to sleep (for at this time I still continued this practice which I have since abandoned) I began to make general suggestions to them. Turning round while I was speaking I perceived that the sight of the others sleeping had induced sleep in Z. Having continued general suggestions for a time I next proceeded to make appropriate suggestions to each patient. I then awakened them all and told Z to return the next day at the same hour. When he kept this appointment, I asked him how he was. I have had no paroxysm he answered. I knew I should be all right yesterday when I left you'. Further suggestions were made that afternoon and a fresh appointment was arranged for the morrow. At this third visit, the report was the same. The paroxysmal dyspnoea was cured and has not since returned\*.

The report quoted in the text was penned six years after the incidents described.

' We may infer that the first paroxysm was genuine and that the 150 others were unconsciously brought on by the patient's expectation that the trouble would recur at the customary hour

The above examples culled from among many of conditional spontaneous autosuggestion will suffice to put us on our guard against pains and other symptoms which appear in us EVERY TIME that this or that happens—when the tie between the supposed cause and the supposed effect is not clearly demonstrated. Attacks of migraine which a lady always has on her at home day seizures of vertigo that come on 'every morning' toothache from which we suffer whenever we are tired headaches that affect us every time we go out of doors bronchitis that recurs every winter the old rheumatism that turns up each December—these and many similar troubles are partly or wholly due to autosuggestion. The fact is proved by the prompt way in which they are cured when countersuggestion is practised after the Nancy method. Even dysmenorrhoea and other menstrual irregularities though they are disorders of a periodic physiological function often belong to the same category and are frequently relieved by the same treatment.

Moreover as we learned just now in the case of post hypnotic suggestion so here we learn once more the teleology of the subconscious which desires to justify to the subject's mind the existence of the assumed causal nexus. We find such excellent reasons for our belief. My vertigo comes on every morning because I awake feeling uneasy. My attacks recur every evening because I am worn out by the labours of the day. I have a migraine every at home day! The matter is quite simple there is such a crowd of people, I have to think of such a lot of things to talk so much. Why do I always begin to vomit when the train reaches Troyes? It is natural enough seeing that the journey from Nancy to Troyes is the maximum my stomach can endure without revolt. Ignore the fact that longer journeys on other lines cause me no

inconvenience. I do not recall that I can work much harder than I work on my at home days and nevertheless remain entirely free from migraine for instance at the ball the other night although I talked a great deal there and it was after the fatigues of the day Everything of this kind is forgotten repressed censored We hold fast to our excellent reasons Terrible is the case of those who are unlucky enough to have a modicum of intelligence and especially of those who have medical knowledge The excellent reasons are built up into a system whose foundations it is far from easy to undermine If anyone wants to discuss the matter if anyone doubts the validity of your arguments you are annoyed for you cling to your reasons for being ill Or rather your subconscious does it through your mouth for it is the subconscious that clings to the reasons

These reasons are like those of the young man referred to above the man who folded his arms ' because he was astonished In reality he folded his arms because of a suggestion impressed upon his subconscious self a suggestion that he was to assume the pose of Napoleon Nevertheless there were excellent reasons for his astonishment, and these reasons had their reasons in turn The end pursued by the suggestion exercises as it were a powerful magnetic attraction upon an entire chain of thoughts We can well imagine that if in the familiar experiment of the physical laboratory the iron filings could speak they too would find excellent reasons for arranging themselves in rows when subjected to the influence of the magnet!

This is one of the reasons why so many doctors (even at Nancy!) still prove refractory to the theory of autosuggestion.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE ACTION OF SLEEP

*The action of sleep* (we mean *natural* sleep) in relation to spontaneous suggestion requires special attention for it is of considerable value in this connection

Many persons are quite independent of the use of alarm clocks or other means of being called in the morning. When they are going to sleep they think of the hour at which they wish to rise and they invariably wake at the appointed time. Others attempt this plan and fail. For everything depends upon how the thinking is done. This word gives us no information as to the precise condition in which those persons who succeed in waking when they desire had spontaneously placed their minds overnight. But by the use of reflective suggestion every one can think in the right manner and can with all requisite precision repeat this elementary experiment. Furthermore without quitting the domain of spontaneous suggestion there are few children who have not performed this same experiment on themselves when they have gone to sleep some evening obsessed with the thought of a great joy awaiting them on the morrow (for instance the early start for a holiday journey). A child unable to wake at eight on ordinary school days will on this occasion be wide awake at five ready to jump out of bed. The subconscious never sleeps and in the subconscious the prospective joy has been at work all night.

This form of suggestion may be conditional. For instance the mother who will sleep through a thunderstorm will awaken at her baby's least cry.

Thus the idea we have in our minds when we fall asleep



may be the starting point of a suggestion which continues to operate during sleep. Certain dreams, certain nightmares inspired by what we were reading before we went to bed afford additional examples. Suggestions of this order may be realised without remarkable accuracy.

For example, as a part of some of the religions of antiquity there was practised the art of invoking dreams which the subject ascribed to the gods, being unaware that he had caused them himself. Without dwelling upon the oracles of ancient Greece where the priests had charms which could make the gods visible to the faithful in slumber (we verge here upon the field of hypnotic hallucination) we find in the worship of Hecate a singular example of spontaneous suggestion. After the performance of certain mysterious rites the devotees of Hecate would have a vision of the goddess during their slumbers provided that before going to sleep they had prayed to her in due form. They must follow the instructions of the goddess.

My image purify as I shall show  
Of wild rue form the frame and deck it o'er  
With lizards such as run about the house  
These mix with resin, myrrh and frankincense,  
Pound all together in the open air  
Under the crescent moon and add this vow

She sets forth the vow and shows how many lizards are needed.

Take lizards many as my many forms  
And do all this with care. My spacious house  
With branches of self-planted laurel form  
Then to my image offer many a prayer  
And in thy sleep thou shalt behold me nigh

It is obvious that the strange and complex ritual prescribed for the preparation of the image must have favoured suggestion by making a powerful appeal to the imagination. The moon and the lizards are remarkably

\* Porphyry quoted by Eusebius *Præparatio Evangelica* Book V Chapter XII—The English translation is by E. H. Gifford. Eusebius *Pamphili Evangelicæ Præparationis* Oxford 1903 Vol. III p. 218

reminiscent of the stars and the toads in the Vaudois recipes for the charming away of warts and for the cure of dropsy

At other times the suggestion (as in posthypnotic suggestion) has originated during sleep in a dream and is realised sooner or later after waking

Here is the case of a Geneva girl whom I was treating in consultation with Pierre Bovet. She suffered from nervous troubles for which the combined action of auto-suggestion and psychoanalysis seemed appropriate. She told us that in the morning she had fainted a thing which had not happened to her for several years. Pierre Bovet then began the psychoanalytic investigation. During this the patient recalled the fact that during the previous night she had dreamed that her father had fallen down in a fainting fit and that this dream had made a strong impression on her mind.

Similarly a man in perfect health dreamed that he was being operated on for appendicitis. Six months or a year later he had an attack of this disease.

It is obvious that in cases of this kind (if we assume the facts to be so accurately known that coincidence may be excluded) two alternative interpretations are possible. It may be supposed that the subconscious has intuitively grasped the imminence of certain lesions, the significance of certain organic predispositions, that it has deduced, has concluded, and has revealed its conclusions in the form of a dream. Even if this be so it does not necessarily follow that the dream foreshadows the oncoming of an inexorable fate. It is no more than a suggestion favouring the realisation of something that was perhaps threatening, but a countersuggestion may avert the trouble.

We must not suppose that what happens when we are asleep is radically different from what happens when we are awake. The foreshadowing idea, the presentiment that we are going to be ill, may likewise be inspired by an already existing lesion, by a predisposition to the disease. This idea is none the less a suggestion.

The presentiment does not determine the future for it may be neutralised by a countersuggestion as we have already learned and as we shall learn still more convincingly by and by

Even when the subject has dreamed of events which subsequently come to pass we must not be too ready to infer that the dream was prophetic Still less must we plunge into metaphysics still less must we make the facile affirmation that absolute determinism is experimentally proved saying that whatever is written is written The considerations developed in Chapter VI relating to the effects of autosuggestion upon the actual course of events will suffice to guard us against such hasty conclusions

We have now examined

1 Cases in which the suggestion had its origin when the subject was just falling asleep

2 Cases in which the suggestion originated during sleep

There are also cases of a more complex kind more or less synthetic of 1 and 2 In these instances the idea which is in the subject's mind just as he falls asleep, undergoes ramification during slumber it becomes associated with other ideas requisite for its suggestive realisation during the period of sleep and unknown to our conscious ego complicated mental operations are performed

For instance, we fall asleep puzzling over a sum and wake to find it solved The concentration of the attention before going to sleep has here determined the suggestion Sometimes as soon as the answer is found, it appears to the sleeper in the form of a dream as when a number shows itself to him written on a blackboard In other cases it awakens the subject in the middle of the night Moreover these occurrences are not limited to the solution of arithmetical and similar problems A poet unable to write an elusive stanza will at night throw down his pen and leave the page blank In the morning he will wake up to find the stanza ready in his mind Sometimes

again he will hear a voice dictating it to him while he dreams and will awaken prematurely in order to note it down

Finally some question may be troubling us greatly when we go to sleep but in the morning we find that our difficulties have vanished and that our mind is made up The wisdom of the nations has embodied this familiar experience in a proverb Night brings counsel

These facts are well known but we are too apt to dismiss them as exceptional or merely strange phenomena We have failed hitherto to note their enormous significance and to apply them as they might be applied.

## CHAPTER TEN

# THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS (THE LAWS OF SUGGESTION)

WHAT conclusions should now be drawn?

1 *Law of Concentrated Attention*—The essential and invariable condition of spontaneous suggestion relates to the first phase of the process *The idea which tends to realise itself in this way is always an idea on which spontaneous ATTENTION is concentrated* or an idea which has been forced on the attention after the manner of an obsession. When the idea is subconscious there is sometimes a transfer of obsession a transfer of attention this may at first throw us off the trail but psychoanalysis will clear up the difficulty

2 *Law of Auxiliary Emotion*—As Ribot has shown spontaneous attention is closely associated with our tendencies it dwells on anything which is in conformity with them or upon anything which conflicts with them it naturally possesses that is to say a certain affective accompaniment The more marked this affective accompaniment the more strongly is suggestion favoured *When, for one reason or another an idea is enveloped in a powerful EMOTION there is more likelihood that this idea will be suggestively realised* In the course of the preceding examples we have frequently seen emotion at work But there are typical cases in which this role of emotion appears in isolation so that it is more conspicuous \*

\* Fomllée the philosopher who formulated the notion that ideas are forces, advanced the principle that ideas act only through the instrumentality or sensibility

Certain authors (Thorndike for instance) have flatly denied the exis

We see this for example, in stage fright and in the terror of the examinee. A candidate who knows his subject perfectly well may suddenly be stricken with suggestive amnesia. In essence there is no difference between this and the forgetfulness of a proper name in ordinary conversation but the examinee's amnesia is far more intense its higher degree corresponding with the greater intensity of the emotion.

Violent emotion appears to heighten the force of suggestions of any kind. Intense fear may thus have two very different results the divergence depending on the nature of the idea present in the mind. Fear may glue the feet to the ground. A motor dashes round the corner when you are walking in the middle of the road you are afraid you will not be able to get out of the way in time.

tence of ideomotor force. An idea as such they say is unable to work for its own realisation when this seems to happen there is always an intermediary affective element. Since the pure idea is an abstraction, since in actual experience an idea invariably has an emotional colouring it would seem a delicate matter to judge between the two theses. James Drever (*Instinct in Man A Contribution to the Psychology of Education*, Cambridge University Press 1917) opines that the decision is impracticable in the present state of our knowledge. Having deduced the consequences of Thorndike's hypothesis he justly remarks that if it be true that there is no such thing as ideomotor force suggestion (which is defined wholly in the terms of such a force) would no longer exist as a primary force but would be reducible to other forces (instinct affect etc.) But it is obvious as Drever himself shows that until this reduction is possible (being assumed for the sake of argument to be possible) we must continue to look upon suggestion as a primary force. Though it may be possible that the laws of suggestion will some day be subsumed under other laws this does not invalidate the existing laws of suggestion any more than the conception of weight is a figment because it proves to be nothing more than a particular instance of universal gravitation.

But in any case the part played in suggestion by the affective element is considerable. Even Drever whose views are ingenious looks upon this affective element as a possible means for effecting the synthesis of the two meanings of the term suggestion (acceptation and ideoreflex power). An idea as its nature and the conditions varied would transform itself now into a belief and now into an action. For like reasons the idea would undergo transformation upon encountering in the subject either an instinctive interest to be realised or a deep-seated and uninhibited tendency which it could satisfy.

(Edward Lee Thorndike's book, referred to above is *Educational Psychology* briefer course New York 1913—See Chapter VI.)

and consequently you cannot move a step On the other hand fear may restore the use of his legs to a paralytic In 1915 in one of the air raids on Paris a paralysed woman living on the fifth storey found herself in the porter's lodge on the ground floor without knowing how she had got there a bomb had exploded close at hand and she had fled downstairs in a moment the idea of flight at all hazards had seized her mind, and under the influence of the violent emotion this idea had been transformed into action \*

Emotion it might be said instantaneously raises an idea to the boiling point intensifies it to the degree when it can become an effective force

3 *Law of Reversed Effort* — Another law we have caught a glimpse of on several occasions runs as follows *When an idea imposes itself on the mind to such an extent as to give rise to a suggestion all the conscious efforts which the subject makes in order to counteract this suggestion are not merely without the desired effect but they actually run counter to the subject's conscious wishes and tend to intensify the suggestion* The efforts are spontaneously reversed so as to reinforce the effect of the dominant idea Whenever anyone is in the state of mind, ' I should like to but I cannot '† he may wish as much as he pleases but the harder he tries, the less he is able

This law of reversed effort is revealed in all its simplicity to everyone who is learning to ride a bicycle When we are at length able to wobble painfully along should we see a big stone lying in the middle of the road, we know that all our attempts to avoid it serve only to direct our steering wheel towards the obstacle upon which it impinges with deadly precision Thus we seem to search out even

\* In elucidation of this example, it is necessary to point out that in man, as in the lower animals fear shows itself in two very different forms In some cases fear stimulates to flight in other cases fear stimulates to concealment and immobility Thus there are two distinct types of fear and English authors accordingly speak of the instinct for flight and the instinct for concealment It would be an error to assert that any kind of emotion can intensify any kind of suggestion.

† The condition is often expressed by the phrase ' I can't help it. '

the smallest pebbles that are most remote from our proper course. Our desperate tugs at the handlebar avail us nothing. The stone has attracted our attention, our emotions are aroused, suggestion is at work and our efforts to counteract it serve merely to reinforce it.

This is something more than a quaint experience. It is an illustration of a law valid for all the obstacles we have to encounter in our path through life.

4 *Law of Subconscious Teleology*—Suggestion acts by subconscious teleology. *When the end has been suggested the subconscious finds means for its realisation.* In the search for expedients it often astonishes us by its skill and sagacity. All is grist which comes to its mill and it has no scruples about cheating. Coué gives me a typical example.

A chemist's assistant having heard talk of the results of suggestion wished to be hypnotised by Coué who at that date still practised this method. But the subject had an overpowering fear that it might prove impossible to reawaken him and had continually to be reassured upon the point. Sleep was induced. At the agreed signal he opened his eyes but declared that he was blind. Coué treated the matter lightly, hypnotised him once more and soon put the imaginary blindness to flight. How had it originated? Under the influence of an autosuggestion, the conviction 'I shall never wake again.' The hypnotiser's suggestion that he should open his eyes did not fully dispel this conviction. While obeying the order, the subconscious found a way to realise the primitive autosuggestion through fraud. The simulated blindness was equivalent to the closure of the eyes characteristic of sleep, which was inhibited by a countersuggestion. This false blindness was therefore chosen as the next best thing to remaining asleep.

5 In addition to the four laws hitherto formulated we may add that spontaneous autosuggestion is a phenomenon of everyday occurrence. To the subject it is no whit inferior in importance to the classic form of hypnotic suggestion. Often indeed, the results of spontaneous



autosuggestion are far more intense and far more lasting than those of hypnotic suggestion. Moreover the state of *natural* sleep is extremely favourable to the development of spontaneous autosuggestion.

6 Having dealt with theoretical conclusions we may now pass to practice. We should keep watch on our spontaneous autosuggestions. we should track them to their lairs. we should as the English phrase is control our thoughts checking the undesirable ideas which would transform themselves into noxious suggestions (ideas of weakness poverty impending misfortune illness). We should abstain from attempts to learn the future by consulting mediums and clairvoyants whose fantastic prophecies will germinate in our minds into veritable suggestions and will tend to realise themselves so that a prophetic of misfortune may perchance prove an unwitting criminal. When we have occasion to refer to our habitual ailments we should be careful always to employ the *past* tense saying I have slept badly of late instead of the customary present I am a bad sleeper which condenses the present and the future and involves the future just as much as if we were to say I shall sleep badly to night. Furthermore we should make it a rule to talk as little as possible about our ailments.<sup>1</sup> When we are asked how we are it is better to reply Quite well thank you —better not only that we may avoid aggravating our own troubles but in order that we may avoid disseminating suggestive contagion. Speaking generally we should turn our minds away from 'undesirable' things. But how? Here lies the field for reflective suggestion.

<sup>1</sup> "The Greeks had the excellent sense not to talk overmuch about their ailments. W H S Jones Malaria London 1907 p 26.

**PART TWO**  
**REFLECTIVE SUGGESTION**



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE LAW OF REVERSED EFFORT

THE study of spontaneous autosuggestion has taught us that, under certain conditions an idea is able unaided to release a force which by means of subconscious activities can realise the idea. The key of the whole mechanism is the idea itself.

We ought then to be able to guide autosuggestion as we please. It is a natural force which we can court. When the idea is unfavourable we can change it; when it is good we can reinforce it. We have merely to substitute for spontaneous attention that voluntary attention with which, as civilised adults, we are all familiar. But in practice the matter is by no means simple.

Let us return to the laws which we formulated at the close of Part I. Let us consider the first three of these laws: those which relate to the preliminary conditions requisite for suggestion; those which show what characters an idea must exhibit if it is to bring about its own realisation. These are

- 1 The law of concentrated attention,
- 2 The law of auxiliary emotion,
- 3 The law of reversed effort

We are tempted to say: let us conform to these laws as the mechanical inventor conforms to the laws of mechanics. Let us voluntarily place ourselves in the conditions of which nature has set us the example by realising them spontaneously.

But a very little thought will reveal the difficulties in our path.

In the first place the second law reminds us that emotion plays a considerable part in the production of suggestions. We think above all of faith cures of cures due to faith in the healer and we remember that faith heals in proportion as it is an emotional state. We recall the case in which paralysis was cured by the fear resulting from an aerial bombardment. And we are forced to the conclusion that where voluntary suggestion is concerned this potent adjuvant *lively emotion* will commonly be lacking. For while we are familiar with voluntary attention and know it to be no less puissant than spontaneous attention we know nothing of voluntary emotion seeing that emotion is by definition a passive state which cannot be manufactured to order. Unless indeed we can produce it voluntarily by suggestion? But here we are running ahead and seem to have entered a vicious circle. For the nonce we must consider the possibilities of voluntary suggestion without the help of this auxiliary on which we were relying. Happily it was no more than an auxiliary but how valuable a one!

We are left with the first law and the third the law of concentrated attention and the law of reversed effort. These laws separately considered seem to offer no further difficulties. We can concentrate voluntary attention upon any physical or mental modification we please. As for the struggle summed up in the law of reversed effort that apparently does not come into the question at all since here our desires are in precise conformity with our thoughts.

But we must quit generalities and must enter the sphere of the concrete. The frequency of spontaneous suggestions above all of bad ones shows us that the first task of reflective suggestion must be to neutralise these noxious suggestions to struggle against suggestions that are already in operation. Yet now when we concentrate voluntary attention upon the good idea which we are to substitute for the bad idea when we devote all our energies to this substitution what will happen? A reversal of effort, nothing more. The harder we try to

think the good idea the more violent will be the assaults of the bad idea. It will be with us as it is with the neurasthenic who engulfs his limbs in the quicksand of neurasthenia because he is struggling to escape from it (p. 38) as it is with one obsessed who aggravates his obsession by endeavouring to throw it off as it is with the drunkard whose best efforts to give up drinking serve merely to lead him to the nearest taproom.

Voluntary suggestion understood as we were inclined to understand it therefore reveals itself not as powerless, but as possessed of negative force in its role of counter-suggestion. Must we limit its use to cases in which we are not at war with ourselves to cases in which we merely wish to call into existence a mental or bodily state that does not conflict with any antecedent spontaneous suggestion?

But in these cases too the difficulty persists. Voluntary effort essentially presupposes the idea of a resistance to be overcome. I<sup>+</sup> comprises both action and reaction. The two notions are simultaneously present at the moment of the effort. If then (and this is a matter of the first importance) I concentrate voluntary attention on an idea which implies my making an effort I am simultaneously conscious of an action towards this idea and of a resistance in consequence of which the idea continually tends to escape me, so that I must unceasingly recall my wandering attention. According to Maine de Biran the consciousness of effort synthetises that of the ego and of the non ego. We may add that in the effort of voluntarily attending to an idea our consciousness embraces at one and the same time thought and non thought or, let us say our state of mind synthetises, on the one hand the idea and on the other hand, the resistance which this idea has to being thought.

In these circumstances we do not think *a single idea* but

Cf Maine de Biran's analysis of effort in Part I Section II of his *Essai sur les fondements de la psychologie Oeuvres inédites* 1839 Vol I.

Attention as Ribot has shown is never stable. It is an unceasing return of the mind to the object of attention.

*two conflicting ideas* And if our state of consciousness is sufficiently reinforced by attention for the origination of a suggestion to be possible it is not a *single suggestion* that will result but there will be *two conflicting suggestion* which will neutralise one another more or less perfectly.<sup>1</sup> The yield therefore will be far less copious than in the case of spontaneous suggestion And if it should unfortunately happen that the sentiment of effort and resistance predominates we shall probably arrive at a negative result the reverse of that which we desire a result whose dimensions will be proportional to the efforts we have made to avoid it.<sup>2</sup>

Experience verifies what reason has led us to forecast Every day we see novices in the practice of reflective suggestion begin by attaining contradictory results The indicator of the balance swings now in the right direction and now in the wrong and when the task before us is to uproot a preexistent suggestion we frequently encounter a check at the outset At this stage therefore, many persons unless they find an adviser who is able to explain to them the cause of their failure are inclined to throw the handle after the hatchet

The unprecedented success of the New Nancy School has been due to its having had these competent advisers persons who have been able experimentally and by brief verbal explanations to throw light upon the vital point to disclose the stumbling block and to help people past this initial difficulty Coué's most original contribution his stroke of genius, was I consider, his discovery of the

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Parkyn writes (op cit p 96) As a matter of fact, it is impossible to concentrate the mind upon a single object for more than a few moments at a time. Voluntary concentration really consists in a repetition of successive efforts to bring back a subject to the mind. Parkyn however not having grasped the law of reversed effort fails to draw from this observation the conclusions drawn in the text.

<sup>2</sup> When we vainly endeavour to write a stanza overnight, and in the morning find the stanza ready written in the mind it is doubtless essential that our discouragement that the sense of impotence which led us to throw down our rebellious pen shall not have been too vivid when we were still trying to write.

law of reversed effort. He did not give it a name—he did not find for it a definitive psychological formula—he did not analyse it. But he discovered it—and leaving to others the study of its essential principle and its innumerable consequences—he passed without delay to its most urgent applications. Adopting a practical outlook he gave to his law an incisive formulation so that it could make itself felt—could be graven on everyone's memory. He is careful to point out that the mathematical terminology employed in the formula is nothing more than a metaphor 'which aims at making his thought intelligible'. There is no implication that the law has the theoretical precision of Weber's and Fechner's law of sensation—Fechner's statement of this law assuming definite logarithmic form. To forestall obvious criticism it is desirable to insist upon the reservation once again. Having pointed this out we proceed to give Coué's formula in his own words.

When the will and the imagination are at war the imagination *invariably* gains the day.

'In the conflict between the will and the imagination the force of the imagination is *in direct ratio to the square of the will*.'

This law of reversed effort revealed in its full power when the subject has to strive against a prior suggestion is not peculiar to such instances. It operates in all suggestions wherein effort of will is the leading factor. As we have just explained it is an outcome of the very nature of effort and it is daily verified by Coué and his followers. If we enquire of the new 'pupils' of those that have failed in their first attempts concerning the manner in which they made their suggestions we get some such answer as this: 'I took a lot of pains—I tried as hard as I could. But as soon as the pupil is made to realise that herein precisely lies his error he promptly begins to make headway.'

Coué therefore has the best of reasons for drawing the following conclusion:

'Above all the will must not intervene in the practice



of autosuggestion This recommendation is absolutely essential

And a little farther on he writes

This observation is of capital importance It explains why we get such unsatisfactory results in the treatment of moral disorders when we aim at the *reeducation of the will* What we have to work for is the *education of the imagination* It is thanks to this difference of method that I have often been able to attain success where others persons of conspicuous ability have failed <sup>1</sup>

We are now able to understand how great an advance has been made from the position of Paul Emile Lévy who looks upon autosuggestion as 'the rational education of the will' and from that of Herbert Parkyn who writes

In developing voluntary concentration light exercises in concentrating should be used at first and if the practices be kept up regularly it will become possible to impose greater and still greater tasks upon the mind <sup>2</sup> It is obvious from what has been said above that in some cases autosuggestion based upon effort will have the desired result but in many instances the result is negative is the reverse of what we desire and in any case it can never compete with the potency of spontaneous auto suggestion

To sum up autosuggestion operates in accordance with two essential laws the law of concentrated attention and the law of reversed effort Now in voluntary suggestion these two laws are in conflict The working of the second law tends to raze to the ground what we are building up by appealing to the first

To secure comparatively stable results therefore for *voluntary* attention in the strict sense of the term we must substitute something else, which we are about to describe But the reader will understand why we have rejected

Op cit p 10.

Parkyn op cit p 95—Consult in addition, Bonnet Précis d'auto-suggestion volontaire Roussel, Paris 1911 The subtitle of Bonnet's book is Education pratique de la volonté—This confusion is general among writers on the subject

the phrase voluntary suggestion It involves to some extent a contradiction in terms

Herewith we have indicated the chief innovation made by the New Nancy School an innovation which will characterise this school and give it a definite place in history With the law to which we have given the name of the law of reversed effort Coué has introduced the elements of a positive revolution into the discipline of our mental activities What we have to do obviously, is not to *substitute* autosuggestion for the will but to *superadd* autosuggestion to the will as a very different mode of activity as one which can gain desirable ends where the will fails to gain them or does so inefficiently and as one which will only come to full fruition on condition *that it is not confused with voluntary effort* What is the nature of this suggestion? That is the matter we have now to consider Till to-morrow or till a more distant future must be left the elaboration of the manifold consequences with which the new idea is gravid

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE OUTCROPPING OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

## RELAXATION

WE are therefore faced with the following problem *how to realise the conditions wherein the desired suggestion will come into being with the minimum of effort* In other words, we have to find an equivalent for voluntary attention (in the sense in which physicists speak of the mechanical equivalent of heat) to discover a condition in which there will be no voluntary effort or at least one in which voluntary effort will be minimal but which will none the less be quite as competent as attention to keep our mind occupied exclusively or almost exclusively with a particular thought

In practice, this problem was partially solved by all those who consciously or unconsciously were pioneers in the use of autosuggestion They one and all refer more or less explicitly to a peculiar condition to which various names have been given To mention a few of these Liebault speaks of *charm* writers of the American and British schools of *concentration* Payot the educationist of *meditative reflection* Paul Emile Lévy, of *collectedness* (recueillement) Bonnet, of *autohypnosis*

These authors do not all refer to precisely the same condition but in every case the state of which they speak is more or less akin to sleep It is characterised by complete or partial immobility and by partial suspension of some of the mental faculties. But serious confusion arises in so far as these authors have failed to make the law of reversed effort their starting point, and in so far as they identify the state in question with an act of will instead

of contrasting it with an act of will. Some persons are fortunate enough to grasp the essential nature of this condition and they are successful with autosuggestion. Others following the books or guided by the advice of authorities taking their stand upon the will make efforts and achieve nothing more than debatable results. For it is just as impossible to carry out suggestion through the instrumentality of the will as it is to write poetry by the rules of prosody just as impossible (to use Bergsonian terminology) as it is for intelligence to do the work of intuition. We are dealing with different categories.

We shall more readily grasp the affinities of the condition favourable to reflective suggestion if we recall our knowledge of the process of suggestion in general. There are as we have learned three phases in suggestion during the second of these (preeminently dynamic) work, often a vast amount of work, goes on in the *subconscious*. This subconscious or unconscious, plays a conspicuous role in modern psychology, which is gradually revealing its attributes. The subconscious (the term does not mean an 'inferior or subordinate consciousness, but a hidden consciousness—a consciousness that lies at a lower level than the familiar consciousness of everyday life) is comparable to use Pierre Janet's simile to the deeper geological strata, those covered by the superficial and only visible stratum to which latter our ordinary consciousness may be compared. The subconscious is a storehouse of the memories that have lapsed from the ordinary consciousness of the wishes and sentiments that have been repressed of the impressions of a distant past. But it is far from being inert for it contains in addition the subsoil waters which are unceasingly at work. It contains the suggestions which will well up into the open after their hidden passage. This is all imagery but it serves, better than pure abstractions to convey some notion of the complex reality we have learned to recognise in the subconscious.

Now there are times when, there are states in which,

these lower strata rising as in a wave pierce the crust and crop out on the surface, so that the superficial consciousness is more or less submerged and the subconscious becomes apparent. Sleep is the most characteristic of these conditions. Psychoanalysis has definitely proved that the subconscious is revealed in sleep that during sleep what has been repressed rises once more to the surface and becomes manifest in the form of dreams which can be remembered in the waking state. We know moreover that the dream is a flow of images infinitely swifter and more copious than the flow of the waking consciousness. We know that in a minute the dream consciousness traverses scenes in which the duration of several hours is simulated. The faculties of inhibition, decision, effort, ratiocination, will and voluntary attention appear to be in abeyance more or less, and everything happens in the dream consciousness as if these faculties which during the waking state slacken the mental flow, had withdrawn their restraining influence.

But quite apart from sleep there are fairly stable conditions in which though the superficial consciousness is not wholly suppressed there is a tendency to the outcropping of the subconscious. First of all comes the state betwixt sleep and waking just before we fall asleep and just before we are fully reawakened. In the daytime again we have the various conditions usefully subsumed under the name of *reverie* which are in fact a miniature dream, a waking sleep. In reverie we abandon the struggle for life we cease to control our thoughts, we give them free rein. Once more the repressed rises towards the surface there are waves of sadness or desire, deceptive images surging up from the depths of our being, so closely do these resemble dream images that psychoanalysts turn them to equal account, discovering in them the disguised and symbolical expression of everything that we refuse to avow to ourselves. To sleep declares Bergson is to become disinterested. In like manner to dream is to disinterest oneself from immediate material activities it is to disregard, for the nonce, all adaptation to everyday

life, to its utilitarian solicitations it is to set sail upon the waters of the inner world

We may add that people vary much as to the degree in which they display a tendency to the outcropping of the subconscious Since the condition which favours this outcropping is one of release from tension one of *relaxation* of attention and inhibition all the causes which predispose to such relaxation may promote the outcropping of the subconscious Thus it is that woman as contrasted with man seems to be in closer and more continuous touch with the subconscious Hartmann affirmed this many years ago in his metaphysical terminology Ribot gives a reason for it when he shows that the effort of attention is a muscular effort which like all muscular effort induces fatigue more speedily in women than in men so that relaxation ensues earlier in the former Still greater in this respect is the contrast between children and adults

Furthermore there are certain temperaments<sup>1</sup> peculiarly well equipped for communication with the subconscious to use Flournoy's metaphor they are 'artesian wells' wherein the subsoil waters rise spontaneously to the surface

Examples are furnished by those who display mediumistic phenomena such as hallucinations and automatic writing phenomena shown by psychoanalysis to belong to the domain of the subconscious Additional instances are afforded by artists and particularly those with true artistic genius who feel as if their creative work were inspired by some other mind than their own In most of these cases if we subject them to psychoanalysis we can prove that 'the presiding energy is that of the subconscious'<sup>2</sup> The revelatory character of art is doubtless in most cases

<sup>1</sup> Such persons are characterised by exceptional and sometimes morbid sensibility of the nervous system

<sup>2</sup> Psychoanalysis has been successfully applied to art and above all to poetry A whole literature has sprung up dealing with this subject. Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci, Lenau myths fairy tales etc. have been psychoanalysed.

Consult the bibliography in Régis and Hesnard op. cit

due to the fact that the artist gives expression to that which everyone conceals and dissimulates—and yet to that which everyone feels the need of expressing

We have already seen that natural sleep favours suggestion. But the same may be said of all the states we have just been describing for they all have certain physiological characters which they share with sleep. They are all characterised by *relaxation* by a *suspension of inhibition* by an *outcropping of the subconscious*. Persons of the types mentioned in the paragraphs immediately preceding are more sensitive than others not only to induced suggestion (this is a familiar fact) but also to spontaneous suggestion and to *reflective suggestion*. Such persons are the quickest to grasp the principles and methods of reflective suggestion and are those who make the most rapid progress.

But some will object if this be so then reflective autosuggestion is dangerous for it requires a relaxation of the active and higher faculties. To practise it successfully we must model ourselves upon the weaker kinds of temperament upon women children and artists. However this objection involves a vicious circle of argument for autosuggestion likewise is an active and creative faculty and is in many instances more powerful than the ordinary will. You may speak of it if you like as a different kind of will as a force which is latent in weaker temperaments. There are certain persons whom we look upon as persons of 'weak temperament' because they are autosuggestible and because they are continually the victims of pernicious autosuggestion. But from the day when the key to suggestion is given them the force which was fighting against them becomes their best ally and we see these same individuals perform prodigies of energy. A knowledge of suggestion discloses to us that in the persons in whom we had glimpsed a taint of impotence there really exists a power with which the will we pride ourselves on so greatly is in many instances unable to compete. Moreover when we grasp with increasing clear-

ness the existence of our states of relaxation and reverie it does not follow that thereby we have enfeebled our will and reduced our power of attention. It would be as reasonable to say that sleep reduces our muscular energy when precisely on account of the relaxation that takes place in sleep it recuperates that energy. In a word, the will is one kind of force and suggestion is another; their respective roles will be explained more clearly in the sequel, but we must not suppose that in working for the acquirement of the power of autosuggestion we are risking the loss of the power of the will, that we are throwing away the substance for the shadow. Far from it, autosuggestion, as soon as we have made it our own, will become a means for the fuller development of all our faculties, including the will.

A passing observation is requisite here. It is admitted that women, whose character is in certain respects feebler than that of men, nevertheless display at times the most marvellous endurance and energy. From this some psychologists have inferred that the 'will' of women is potentially at least, if not in actual operation, superior to that of men. But when, on the other hand, we are told that effort is muscular, that the will is in large measure inhibition, and that muscular energy and the faculty of inhibition are less in women, we find ourselves involved in flagrant contradiction. This contradiction disappears if we consider the miracles of feminine energy as autosuggestive rather than as voluntary phenomena, as nervous rather than muscular—as phenomena in whose production the subconscious plays a great part—a fact which does nothing to lessen their value.<sup>1</sup> Contrariwise, for what may we not expect when we have gained methodical control over the force which, in spontaneous action, has already worked such miracles?

In the states and temperaments we have been describing there is usually a heightened emotional susceptibility. Reciprocally again, it is possible that every emotion is

<sup>1</sup> By what right should muscle be regarded a priori as superior to nerve? The only right that occurs to me is the right of the stronger.



a condition characterised by the outcropping of the sub-conscious by a sort of earthquake which convulses the whole being bringing the deeper strata to the surface. In certain emotional states the rapidity of the stream of consciousness recalls what occurs in dreams. Emotion is likewise an instigator of images : a condition in which the inhibitive faculties appear to be thrown out of gear. Without embarking upon hypotheses which would for the moment be sterile without asking whether the outcropping of the subconscious operates upon suggestion through the instrumentality of the heightened emotional susceptibility by which it is accompanied or whether on the contrary the emotion operates in virtue of the outcropping which it seems to occasion without enquiring to what extent this activity depends upon the nervous system, and what nervous or other modifications are characteristic of it—let us confine ourselves to pointing out the close relationship which exists between the two states between on the one hand outcropping of the subconscious in association with increased emotional susceptibility and on the other suggestibility (or autosuggestibility).

Everything takes place as if suggestion in order to bear fruit must be buried in the subconscious and as if this fruition were facilitated by the outcropping of the subconscious.

We are now beginning to realise in what direction we must seek the desired equivalent for voluntary attention, and the key to reflective suggestion. First of all we have to make use of and in case of need to induce, conditions in which the outcropping of the subconscious occurs. The ways of doing this will now be considered.

This is especially noticeable in the poet for the images flow from his pen more spontaneously more vigorously and more rapidly in proportion as his emotion is more intense.

## CHAPTER THREE

### EDUCATION OF THE OUTCROPPING

#### COLLECTEDNESS

FROM what has gone before it may at once be inferred that *the education of the outcropping* will make the soil favourable for the germination of suggestions

Pathological or exceptional phenomena are in many instances magnifications of the normal. Now in the case of persons endowed with mediumistic faculty in those who have the power of automatic writing for instance there has been an education of the outcropping. The subject by the frequent repetition of an exercise develops himself thus rendering increasingly supple the mechanism by which the subconscious manifests itself. But in ordinary life without any departure from conditions that are perfectly normal such an education is no less possible.

At moments when we have a little leisure when we are free from the pressing demands of outward activity at times when we have a right to repose let us abstain from the search for some futile distraction let us refrain from absorbing toxins from the newspapers and let us instead, use our spare time for the education of the outcropping. Let us practise ourselves (nothing is easier or less tiring) in summoning the subconscious, without going to sleep but so as to become accustomed to these mixed states wherein the ordinary consciousness is not completely annulled, but wherein it ceases to form a rigid cortex and becomes a transparent veil. In place of seeking repose in *distraction* which rests the attention by changing its object but con to keep the attention employed

let us seek repose in *relaxation* in which the attention no longer tries to fix itself on anything. Then the most inward the most repressed conditions begin to pass through the mind in the form of evanescent images of mobile and rapid reveries. This will at the same time teach us to avoid making any effort and effortlessness is a habit we must acquire if we are to practise autosuggestion. A good way of bringing about the requisite relaxation of the mind is to immobilise the body or to speak more strictly to relax the muscles for muscular relaxation seems to generalise itself and to promote the relaxation of the muscles of attention<sup>1</sup>. Any kind of meditation in which we withdraw into ourselves without making too much effort to think, is a form of outcropping.

It will also be understood that when we recommend that relaxation should be substituted for distraction, we do not in speaking of distractions think of those higher forms of art to which this term is often improperly applied. Etymologically to distract signifies to draw asunder and applied to our minds it means to draw the mind from one thing to another. But true art has a very different function. It helps us to live within ourselves, it helps the subconscious to rise to the surface. In the passivity in the hypnosis (as Paul Souriau terms it) into which we are plunged by the contemplation of a masterpiece we have perhaps the best the most ideal example of outcropping.

Artistic education everything which promotes the general culture of the imagination, everything which teaches us to dream to withdraw so effectually from the outer world that it no longer seems to exist for us (but without the voluntary effort that accompanies reflection properly so called)—all these things bring about the education of the outcropping.

In the education of children nothing could be more

<sup>1</sup> When Baudouin speaks of the muscles of attention he is thinking mainly of the optic muscles which come into play when we fix our eyes on anything to which we attend. This is based on Ribot's demonstration that the effort of attention is a muscular effort. See above p 131. But presumably the inward faculty of attention can be exercised apart from any muscular training.—TRANSLATORS NOTE,

erroneous than to believe that in them imagination is an imperfect form of reason so that imagination must be suppressed and must be replaced by the perfected reason. Imagination is something very different from a larval form of reason. It has its rights side by side with and independently of reason. It is a precious force for the individual were it only as a medium for the outcropping of the subconscious and as a precondition of suggestion. We must teach children to do justice to all their faculties. They must not let any one faculty encroach. They must not for example allow imagination to usurp the place of reason. They must cultivate every faculty, imagination as much as the rest, nay, more than the rest. Fairy tales which certain 'positive'-minded pedants would like to proscribe are the starting point of artistic education and should on no account be neglected.

The state of outcropping induced by a willed (but not voluntary<sup>1</sup>) relaxation constitutes what we shall speak of as *collectedness* [*recueillement*]. At first sight there will seem to be a contradiction between these two terms *collectedness* and *relaxation* but the contradiction is apparent merely. As soon as the attention is relaxed it becomes possible for all our inner life to flow together to collect itself within us. Attention if you like to phrase it thus is dispersed over a large number of states of consciousness, but, conversely these states are gathered together under the mind's eye in so far as they can be gathered together. It is in this sense that we are 'collected'. We have gathered up our states as the ears of corn are gathered up to form a sheaf, or rather, they have gathered themselves together into a sheaf.

Let us add finally that psychoanalysis, above all in the form of autopsychanalysis constitutes a methodical education of the outcropping for the simple reason that it is continually calling up the subconscious. In this sense, there can be no question that the analysis of our

<sup>1</sup> This relaxation is the outcome of a decision of the will but a decision in virtue of which the will abdicates for a season. Relaxation is precisely this abdication.

dreams and memories by psychoanalytic methods (which cannot here be described in detail) is a most valuable habit

But artistic education the development of reverie and the practice of psychoanalysis will be greatly facilitated and reinforced by autosuggestion as soon as we know how to undertake it Thus autosuggestion will favour the conditions which favour it in their turn each acting and reacting on the other accelerating their mutual progress

Let us therefore practise relaxation whenever we can With habit it will grow increasingly familiar The sub-conscious will become more neighbourly and will answer more quickly to our call without our finding it requisite to fly to any narcotic The habit of collectedness will enable us to dispense with the use of opium, of alcohol or of the still more soothing tobacco

To facilitate this collectedness at the outset at least we must by preference choose conditions in which we shall be disturbed as little as possible by external stimuli we must select moments when silence prevails around us Whenever possible, the body should be motionless the muscles relaxed we lie on a couch or lean back in a comfortable armchair we close our eyes For *exercises* in collectedness these conditions are more or less optional but they are essential when autosuggestions are to be made Thus we shall realise the maximum of relaxation, thus we shall attain the highest possible degree of collectedness

In the foregoing pages the writer has paid his tribute to the privileged mental position of certain temperaments women, children and artists being typical of these It is possible that antifeminists pedantic pedagogues and devotees of an overstrained positivism, will find his remarks a trifle irritating, as invalidating some of their favourite arguments But it is none the less true that the outcropping which is the essential characteristic of such temperaments must be cultivated by all who desire to avail themselves of the powers of well-controlled autosuggestion If this implies a plea for nerve against the tyranny of muscle so much the worse for those who contend that sport is the primary factor of civilisation

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A PSYCHOLOGICAL EQUIVALENT FOR ATTENTION

#### CONTENTION

COLLECTEDNESS however with the relaxation and the outcropping which characterise it is no more than a preliminary stage. We were in search of an equivalent for attention and it would be remarkable were we to find this equivalent in relaxation which is the converse of attention. We have to realise a state in which thought is sufficiently intense or sufficiently exclusive to make its power felt by the origination of a suggestion. But in the reverse which issues from relaxation thought is scattered mobile and in a perpetual flux.

Now if we are in this condition what happens when our attention is claimed by a new stimulus as for instance by a noise or by some haunting thought which returns like the shooting of an intermittent pain? Something very remarkable takes place and in current parlance we are said *to awake from our dream*. The moving swarm of mental images suddenly vanishes, as when the lighted pictures vanish from the cinematographic screen. We are confusedly aware that a moment before we were in a world abundantly stocked with mental life but we have forgotten what was passing in that world. A few only of the more striking images continue to emerge from the void they are fleeting outlines disconnected and lifeless. Thus without transitional stages our  
o steps abruptly from marked  
to an extreme contraction. Even the very last images

of the series have almost disappeared. Their passage was doubtless too rapid when they were no longer hemmed in by the barrier of attention; they could not fix themselves in the memory. (We know in fact that attention is one of the conditions indispensable to memorisation. When attention is relaxed, memory becomes enfeebled when we wish to learn by heart we must begin by attending.) On the other hand when we awake from our dream we feel as if we had returned from a great distance, we are like a diver who has come back to the surface. As Bergson would phrase it, we pass from one plane of consciousness to another. We break the net of associated ideas in which we were enmeshed and since there is now no association between the present and the immediate past it is very difficult for the one to call up the memory of the other.

Whatever the causes of this phenomenon we here encounter something that is comparatively rare on our mental life. Ordinarily the past prolongs itself into and merges in the present so that we cannot grasp an isolated state of consciousness unless we can isolate one by a somewhat violent act of attention. But here we have the impression of a mental vacuum. Nothing is present in consciousness beyond the stimulus which recalled us to ourselves, the noise, the thought or whatever it may have been, nothing but this with its immediate associates, the cause of the noise, the memory of some particular person or the like. Unless we violently strain our attention the state of mind remains in comparative isolation.

The same phenomenon is still more conspicuous when we awaken from a sound sleep. The dream upon which our mind was occupied usually lapses into complete oblivion. Yet as everyone who has practised the analysis of his dreams is well aware the dream was there. Auguste Forel writes "I believe on the other hand that we all dream continuously when we are asleep. When I am unexpectedly aroused from sleep at any hour of the night I can invariably seize the last broken link of a chain of dreams. But I forget it speedily unless I make a note of

it or vigorously revive the memory when I awake \* So instantaneous however is the oncoming of oblivion that many persons believe they have not dreamed and the moment of waking is practically a moment of mental vacuity when consciousness takes an entirely fresh start It is true that in most of our reawakenings the objects which first strike our senses are familiar to us Their associative ramifications which we are accustomed to traverse promptly recall us to the framework of our daily life and to the matters with which our mind was occupied the day before But the first time we awake in a strange bed amid unfamiliar surroundings we are apt to be utterly bewildered Our perceptions tell us nothing or almost nothing The mind remains inert contemplating these dumb perceptions failing to grasp the identity of things for there are no associations to set it in motion along the timeworn paths A single mental state or it may be a small group of mental states rises in the mental void and seems to occupy the entire field of consciousness The mind is like a stagnant pool in the absence of any fresh current of images and ideas it tends to remain stable We are justified in describing the condition as one of mental immobility of monoidism, one-ideadness provided always that we are careful not to construe these terms in too absolute a sense but merely as representing a considerable approximation to the reality

Here we have a mental state wherein attention with infinitesimal effort realises an exclusivism which in the normal condition can be realised solely at the cost of considerable effort To this state for which collectedness has paved the way we may give the name of *concentration* a term which in the sense above defined now forms part of the vocabulary of the subject under discussion But

Op cit.—Here is the original German und glaube vielmehr dass alle Menschen im Schlaf fortwährend träumen. Man kann mich z. B. zu keiner Nachtstunde noch so unerwartet wecken ohne dass ich wenigstens das letzte Bruchstück einer Traumkette erwische das ich aber sogleich wieder total vergesse wenn ich es nicht sofort aufschreibe oder mir im Wachzustand energisch wieder vorstelle.



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if we use this word we must define it more carefully than do the Americans who sometimes identify concentration with close voluntary attention and sometimes with relaxation so that in the end the term becomes quite unmeaning. The confusion arises out of the very nature of these various conditions which border upon one another so closely and which pass into one another by brusque transitions at times so that at first sight it is not always easy to know with what we are dealing.

If we prefer to find another name that of *contention* may be suggested for this peculiar form of attention which is neither attention properly so called (tension towards an end) nor yet relaxation [in the French *détente* i.e. the discharge or relaxation of attention]. In contention the idea is as it were folded back upon itself and maintains itself in the field of consciousness without any sensible effort on our part. In these conditions there is spontaneously secured that *intensity* of the idea which we set out to seek. *Contention (concentration) is a psychological equivalent of attention minus effort*.

To realise this condition we must begin by realising the preparatory outcropping either by the deliberate attainment of collectedness or else by turning to account the spontaneous outcropping which characterises the passage from waking to sleep and from sleep to waking. At such a time we must with the minimum of effort permeate the mind with the idea of the desired modifications. Autosuggestion during the moment of first waking and during the last moments before we go to sleep is particularly valuable—the latter above all for the machinery then set in motion has the precious assistance of slumber.

"Many of us wrote Paul Emile Lévy a few years ago 'must have observed how favourable to the birth and ripening of new ideas is the drowsy state just before or just after sleep. We are really in a condition of slight hypnosis, but it is profound enough to be characterised by increased suggestibility. Besides every one can judge for himself and can push the sleep to the stage which

he finds most propitious. These hours when we are able to make use of them in such a way are those most favourable to autosuggestion.

After no more than a few days practice of these exercises in slight hypnosis and autosuggestion we note that the mind concentrates itself upon the matter with far more facility and that concomitantly autosuggestion grows at once more potent and easier ' 1

We may add that thanks to the law of reversed effort it becomes more potent *because* it is easier. And the reason why it becomes easier is that the effort to think along the desired lines which is still appreciable at the outset becomes insignificant as soon as by practice we have acquired the requisite suppleness. The muscles of attention like all the muscles speedily become habituated to their task.

This teaches us that if as we have pointed out training in relaxation is indispensable training in effort none the less has its uses. One who has accustomed himself to making great efforts during the ordinary waking state and more particularly one who has accustomed himself to making great efforts of attention will find that the slight effort of contention comes much more easily to him than it comes to other people, and that for this reason contention will more speedily attain its end. It follows that the various exercises in concentration in the waking state exercises recommended by American authors are by no means devoid of value. Speaking generally all mental or scientific work all methodical and regular memorisation will be found excellent for training the mind to make efforts in attention so that attention grows more and more easy. We may, therefore follow the advice of Herbert Parkyn

' One of the best and simplest practices for developing concentration is to read a sentence in a valuable scientific work the subject matter of which in itself is absolutely unattractive and then endeavour to reproduce the idea expressed in the sentence either verbally or in writing

1 Op. cit.

or both. Having succeeded in obtaining memorising and reproducing the idea expressed in the sentence try several sentences at a time. Next take whole paragraphs then pages then chapters and finally a whole book. There is no better exercise in memorising and concentrating than this.\*

It may be added that all exercises which promote muscular development in general all those which favour the growth of muscular energy have their uses provided that the pupil never neglects the special training of the attention.

But the training of effort in general and of attention in particular are strongly recommended by many authorities, and therefore without wishing to minimise their importance we are inclined rather to lay stress upon their complements which are too often neglected. It is our task to emphasise the value of relaxation of outcropping of contention.

*Contention (concentration) is as it were a crossways where two contraries meet attention and relaxation. It simultaneously presupposes the habit of attention and that of relaxation.*

Everyone, therefore should cultivate both attention and relaxation and each must judge for himself by personal experience whether he needs to devote peculiar care to one or the other. Most people are especially lacking in the power of relaxation and this statement is more applicable to men than to women to adults than to children. On the other hand no one should neglect the training of attention and in this case it is women rather than men, children rather than adults in whom the faculty is deficient.

To realise contention and to render suggestion efficacious, we shall therefore choose by preference and on principle the moments betwixt sleep and waking either before or after slumber. At such times beginners will often find that contention is weak or unstable that the idea of

physical or mental improvement, instead of remaining in the mind, is speedily dissipated. The experimenter lapses into reverie and in an instant the vagrant mind is thinking of anything in the world except what is desired. Sleep is too close at hand and relaxation predominates over contention. If this should happen, the subject must for a time practise collectedness in the fully waking state. The condition in this case is less profound but the experimenter is fully conscious of what he is doing and is therefore master of his thoughts. We should take the opportunity of suggesting to ourselves that henceforward the morning and evening suggestions will be more easily realised and that the desired state will come into existence spontaneously. If we find in this waking collectedness that the difficulty still continues it will be because we have not sufficiently trained our powers of attention and in that case such exercises as those recommended by Parkyn may be of considerable value.

In general however we shall attain perfection if we reiterate the suggestion making it an absolutely regular daily practice. As with all such training muscular or mental this regularity is the first of all essentials, and the student need not be disheartened by his clumsiness in the early stages.

For the rest the above is a mere preliminary outline of reflective suggestion. In practice it has to be reinforced by the simple procedures now to be described.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### AUTOHYPNOSIS

OUTCROPPING somnolence even sleep can be brought about by a means which we have not hitherto described, namely by immobilisation of the attention. When the attention has been immobilised for a long time upon a single object it relaxes itself spontaneously in part from loss of interest, and in part doubtless from fatigue.

In summary classification it may be said that there are two main kinds of immobilisation of the attention

- 1 Fixation
- 2 Seesaw

In fixation proper the attention is exclusively or almost exclusively occupied by a single sensation. In the case of vision for example this may be the contemplation of a luminous point a vivid sensation which has an attractive influence standing out in a privileged manner against a confused or dark background. In the case of hearing it may be some monotonous and continuous stimulus like the roar of a waterfall or the confused noise emanating from a great crowd.

As to immobilisation by seesaw we have examples of this in the noise of the waves beating on the shore where two splashing sounds of different pitch answer one another in an alternating song in the tick tack of a pendulum where the alternation is between sound and silence in lullabies and in any kind of regular rhythm. As Bergson puts it the attention oscillates between two fixed points between two haunting sensations continually repeated.

What happens in these cases is well known. When

the attention has been held for a long time it grows weary In the end we can no longer see what we are looking at we can no longer hear what we are listening to relaxation ensues This relaxation may pass on into sleep

But the outcropping thus produced seems to differ to some extent from the forms of outcropping hitherto described We are in fact aware that an obsessive idea or impression which is in the mind when we fall asleep dominates the whole period of slumber The fruitfulness of overnight suggestions proves the universal validity of this principle We have likewise seen it unmistakably at work in the case of the sum which was unsolved when we went to sleep and which is readily solved when we wake in the morning and we have seen it at work in the ease with which many persons can awake at an hour dictated by autosuggestion The method is of very wide application, as anyone can satisfy himself by the simple practice of autosuggestion which will prove far more convincing than any theoretical demonstration It applies moreover to all the states of somnolence and outcropping just as much as to profound slumber Consequently the states that result from immobilisation of the attention are not likely to be psychologically identical with the states of relaxation pure and simple which were given as primary examples Experience here confirms theory In states resulting from immobilisation of the attention the idea of mental immobility remains dominant from the first we spontaneously suggest to ourselves this mental immobility Consequently although relaxation is in general characterised by reverie by undirected thinking by mobility in these particular instances mental immobility is readily reestablished at the slightest solicitation contention is favoured

*To such states of outcropping produced by immobilisation of the attention we propose to apply the name of*  
HYPNOSIS

This definition of hypnosis is no more arbitrary than our definition of suggestion It will justify itself when we come to speak of induced sleep We shall see that the

characteristic fact in the great majority of cases universally described by the name of *hypnosis* is the preliminary immobilisation of the attention and wherever we find this cause at work wherever we find it leading to out-cropping we are entitled to speak of hypnosis

Hypnosis facilitates suggestion because it favours contention

Obviously when autosuggestion is our aim the hypnosis must not be pushed to the stage of profound sleep in which we shall no longer be able to control the direction of our thoughts But a moderate degree of hypnosis may be recommended for this purpose

The presence of a watch or a clock not far from the ear has a lulling influence On suitable occasions we may take advantage of the neighbourhood of a waterfall a stream, the seashore or we may in more modest fashion, turn to account the drip from a water tap that is imperfectly closed Or in a dark room we may fix the gaze on a luminous point on the motionless flame of a night-light or on the flickering firelight Everyone who has passed a vigil in a sickroom must be familiar with the hypnotic influence of the last named Psychotherapists with a taste for complicated recipes tell us that a peculiarly fascinating influence is exerted by the flickering flame of a spirit lamp when a large pinch of hemp flowers has been macerated in the spirit for twenty four hours For a few minutes or more we concentrate our gaze upon the flame or the luminous point and when the eyes are tired out we allow them to close

It matters little what process is chosen or what simultaneous processes are employed<sup>2</sup> The value is not to be found so much in this or that recipe as in the principles of which they are the respective applications Each one of us can think out for himself new and more practical applications better adapted to the circumstances The governing principle is the immobilisation of the attention either by fixation or by seesaw

<sup>2</sup> Vision may be monopolised by a visual stimulus while simultaneously hearing is monopolised by an auditory stimulus.

But above all we must be careful that the possibility of using physical adjuvants does not make us the slaves of outward circumstances. Already indeed we are far too much enslaved by such circumstances thanks to the dogmas implanted in us by a short sighted medical science from the sixteenth century down to our own day—a medical science which is ignorant of the better half of the human personality and is itself the worst of all suggestions.

Furthermore physical procedures are not the only methods for the production of autohypnosis. The attention may be immobilised in other ways than by an outward sensation. Immobilisation can be brought about by a mental image by an idea. Some can send themselves to sleep by counting or by telling their beads this being a sort of inward lulling. The verbal images evoked in such a manner arise spontaneously without effort owing to the fact that we have evoked them countless times since childhood. The will is no more actively concerned than in the case of the luminous point the flickering of the fire or the sound of the waterfall. Attention once directed clings from a sort of attraction. Sometimes sleep ensues and failing that a certain somnolence is invariable. If we practise this method in the evening when we are already sleepy it is ten chances to one that the coming of sleep will be greatly favoured. If this does not happen the first time it will happen after a few days regular practice.

We must be careful to note that immobilisation of the attention if it is to produce its proper effect must be carried out with no sense of strain. We must be able to maintain it with the minimum of voluntary effort. In fact, when we have to do with external sensations of the type described above (the luminous point, the waterfall etc.) our attention is in the end held in spite of ourselves. An effort rather, is needed to disengage it. The flame of the nightlight will have produced the requisite impression when we find ourselves contemplating it in a state of mind which we wish only to prolong. We are doubtless able to turn our eyes away, but we have no desire to do



so The condition is analogous to that in which people often find themselves on first waking in the morning, they say to themselves that they could get up if they liked but almost against their will they continue to snuggle under the bed clothes It is when this state has been attained that we may allow our eyes to close and may proceed to call up in the mental void the ideas which form the object of our suggestions

In like manner when wishing to immobilise the attention we employ for this purpose an internal state instead of an outward sensation *it is essential that the attention should remain SPONTANEOUSLY immobilised* This is what happens when we tell our beads or count a series of numbers for here habit takes the place of the will and the monotony of the internal utterance acts like the monotony of the ticking clock or the running water

This consideration should always guide us in the search for new methods of autohypnosis

As one of the curiosities of history and further as a lesson in humility we may point out that the states just described under the names of collectedness contention and autohypnosis, are described with considerable psychological acumen though not of course in modern psychological terminology in the precepts by which for centuries past the yogis of Hindustan have been accustomed to attain self mastery<sup>1</sup>

The two states whose acquirement must be the novice's first aim are known as *prātyahāra* (mental examination) and *dharana* (concentration of the mind upon a thought)

In the precepts relative to the former state which is preparatory to the latter we read

Seat yourself for a while and allow your thought to take its own course freely It behaves like a frisky monkey Let the monkey jump about wait and take note Your thought will entertain ugly ideas so ugly that you will be surprised But day by day these errings will become less numerous and less extensive During

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ernest Bosc de Vèze *Traité de Yoga* Daragon Paris, 1908

the first months you will have a thousand thoughts then you will have no more than seven hundred and the number will progressively diminish

It would be difficult to give a better description of the reverie which follows relaxation and of the rapidity of the stream of consciousness in this condition But wait and take note substitute patient exercise for voluntary effort and contention will be born out of the scatterbrain confusion

As for autohypnosis we encounter it in yoga, but tinged with mysticism The sacred word AUM is repeated a myriad times the three sounds A—U—M being well separated and uttered on the respective notes do—mi—sol This we are told produces a mental transformation in the subject which is preparatory to great spiritual progress

Let us return to autohypnosis as described earlier in our own text Since it can be induced by immobilising the attention on a mental state why should we not choose for this mental state (in preference to the bead telling or to the counting) the very idea which is to be the object of the suggestion?

There is in fact no reason to the contrary provided that the idea fulfils the requisite conditions provided that it holds the attention rather than that the attention holds it We must be able to think of it mechanically, ere long in spite of ourselves as if we were obsessed by it in the same way as that in which we listen to the sound of running water

A very simple means of securing this is to condense the idea which is to be the object of the suggestion to sum it up in a brief phrase which can readily be graven on the memory, and to repeat it over and over again like a lullaby The state of hypnosis thereupon ensues with the effortless contention characteristic of the condition We pass unawares into the preliminary stage of hypnosis Relaxation occurs without our noticing it reverie is neutralised by the presence of an idea which makes around itself a

mental void The states we have analysed above are now synthetised into a single state which shares the characters of them all which exhibits phases recalling now one now another but which differs from each This condition is one of preeminent autosuggestibility If we graft it upon a condition of spontaneous outcropping as upon the morning and evening states bordering upon sleep we shall obtain maximum results But it may also be usefully attained during the waking hours This method of repeating a phrase has often been recommended by American writers

If we employ the term *contention* in the sense previously explained we may reserve the name *concentration* for the synthetic state now described It is superfluous to have two names for the same concept We shall therefore define concentration as follows *Concentration is a state of autohypnosis and of persistent contention with one idea the autohypnosis having been induced by the lulling influence of the idea on the mind* Moreover, this condition, like every synthesis, is far simpler in its concrete reality than it seems to be in the explanations and definitions we have to employ when we are describing it

Let us add that to prevent the mind from wandering it may be well to repeat the phrase aloud or at least to sketch its pronunciation with lips and tongue as we utter it mentally This motor accompaniment favours the acquirement of the habit we wish to form gives it a certain solidity and acts as a leash or leading string whereby, without effort, our thought is guided towards its object

## CHAPTER SIX

### GENERAL RULES FOR THE PRACTICE OF AUTOSUGGESTION

WE are now familiar with the practical principle upon which all reflective autosuggestion is based.\* But when we reconsider all that we have said on the subject it is natural that some anxiety should arise concerning the amount of time which it may be necessary to devote daily to the practice of autosuggestion. Concentration as defined at the close of the preceding chapter presupposes that the object of suggestion has been condensed into a brief phrase, one which the memory can retain without appreciable effort. It would seem from this as if the suggestion could apply only to a restricted object and that a fresh sitting would be necessary for each particular case—one suggestion to overcome shyness, another to cure headache—another to quicken the healing of a sluggish wound—and so on. This is indeed the way in which most authors expound the methods of autosuggestion. We quote in full as an example Géraud Bonnet's prescription for the cure of stage fright.

'Let us suppose that on some approaching day

\* In common parlance the word suggestion is sometimes employed to denote the process as a whole comprising all its three phases integrally considered—and sometimes to denote the first phase alone. Thus we are said to suggest something to ourselves when we propose to our mind an idea which is to act as the starting point of a suggestion. No serious inconvenience arises from this double use of the term for the context always makes the meaning clear. Still when we deal with the opening phase only it would be better to speak of formulating or initiating a suggestion. We do not actually make a suggestion until it is successful.

you have to sing at a private party or on a public platform

You have a good voice and you are quite familiar with what you have to sing, you know that the audience will be friendly and that success awaits you

But you are panic-stricken you feel certain that when the time comes you will be seized with stage fright

You are sure that you will be terrified by all the eyes that will be concentrated on you when you appear on the platform you will become uneasy will sing wrong notes and will finally break down

This is an involuntary autosuggestion which has taken possession of your mind

You can combat it by a voluntary autosuggestion

Isolate yourself in a room where no one will come to disturb you To make assurance doubly sure lock the door Settle yourself comfortably in an armchair or lie down if you prefer it, on a sofa or on your bed Close the eyes and if you are afraid of being disturbed by some noise from outside the room plug the ears with cotton wool

Relax your body to the utmost, for this physical inertia favours mental passivity and renders the mind more accessible to suggestion When your nervous energy is no longer dissipated in making movements or in other work it will be concentrated in the brain and you will be better able to devote it to the idea you wish to realise

At the outset endeavour to stop thinking altogether Try to think of nothing at all for a time Then direct your thoughts towards the idea which is worrying you, and counteract it by its converse saying to yourself

I don't suffer from stage fright I sing well I am perfectly easy in my mind

Take a deep breath Wait for a moment, and then say once more I don't suffer from stage fright I sing well I am perfectly easy in my mind

Repeat the process several times repeat it five times ten times or more according to the amount of leisure at your disposal

Have a number of such sittings every day—in bed at night just before you go to sleep during the night if you happen to be awake in the morning before you get up immediately after waking

“If you carry out this plan with assurance and conviction success is certain”

Similarly Herbert Parkyn gives us autosuggestions for success, autosuggestions for optimism autosuggestions for the avoidance of the disagreeable consequences of winter and so on. In themselves all these prescriptions are excellent. But if our task must thus be approached in detail if the sittings must be multiplied (even though through practice the duration of a single sitting be reduced to two or three minutes) we derive the impression that our lives will be chiefly devoted to the cultivation of autosuggestion. Above all will this be the case if the morbid symptoms the defects and the weaknesses we have to overcome should assail us in great numbers. Perhaps we can keep all our suggestions for the mornings and the evenings? But then we are likely to fall asleep before we have finished the series and we shall never be up in time in the morning. Or shall we parcel out the list getting through it by sections on successive evenings and mornings? Shall each day have its morning and its evening bill-of fare, as at a restaurant? So be it. But now training the acquirement of habit by daily repetition will go by the board. Day by day we shall need to make a new effort of thought. This unduly complicated mechanism in a life which in any case is often far from simple will be likely to break down before long.

Must we then reserve this concentration this continued repetition of a phrase for a small number of very special cases while adopting a different procedure for our habitual suggestions? Such a course would seem to be indicated.

For instance we should do well to induce the condition of autohypnosis by a physical method or by the repetition of a phrase *integrally* summarising the suggestions that have to be made. Having attained the requisite state

we should run the mind over the detailed list of the desired suggestions fixing each one of them for a brief period in the centre of mental vision. And we should follow the advice of Paul Emile Lévy, who writes

Let us represent ourselves to ourselves let us picture ourselves as we would like to be—vigorous robust overflowing with health. The greater the sharpness of outline in this idea the more salient it is the more it assumes the form of an image the better the prospects of its realisation. What is well conceived will be easily realised.

This method was at first recommended by Coué. We should be considered formulate a general suggestion repeating it to ourselves a certain number of times ( Day by day in all respects I get better and better ). Thence we should pass to details dwelling mentally for a brief space upon each of the improvements specially desirable for the moment. The general formula remained the same from day to day the details varied with passing needs.

But in the course of his long experience Coué came across facts which led him to simplify his methods and to lay more and more stress upon the concentration previously described.

A female patient came to consult him for troubles of trifling importance, with no thought of using suggestion for the relief of the varicose ulcers from which she likewise suffered. Coué employed in her case as always, induced suggestion in the waking state (or in a state of slight somnolence), as will be described in Part III. He enumerated the troubles of which the patient had complained but naturally said nothing concerning the varicose ulcers since he was not aware of their existence. At the close of the sitting following his usual practice Coué impressed upon the subject the importance of practising autosuggestion every morning and every evening. After a few sittings the patient was cured not only of the troubles about which she had consulted the doctor but also of the varicose ulcers though she had given no thought to these when formulating her suggestions. Yet the ulcers had obsti-

nately resisted various methods of treatment and during the last few weeks before their sudden cure no remedial cause was in operation other than the influence of suggestion.

Coué formed a hypothesis which at that time he was inclined to regard as rather improbable. During the collective sittings the patient might have been impressed by seeing the remarkable cures that were in progress. Some of these were cases of organic disease others were cases of nervous paralysis and since in the latter the cure was at times instantaneous their effect upon the new patient's imagination was considerable. More or less unconsciously she must have formed in her mind some sort of association between these cases and the ulcers from which she herself suffered conceiving the latter perhaps as sometimes immobilising her legs as if she had a nervous paralysis. Under the influence of the suggestion *In all respects I get better and better* her subconscious had considered the ulcers to be one of these respects to be a particular case embraced by the general formula.

The hypothesis seemed far fetched. Nevertheless Coué's attention had been directed to this line of thought. In the collective sittings, conversation between the patient and the doctor was always very brief and a special questioning was requisite when details had to be obtained concerning this or that phenomenon. But as soon as Coué had become specially interested in this matter of unforeseen suggestions, he secured a number of reports confirming his hypothesis in the most categorical fashion possible.

Under these conditions it became superfluous for the patient to go into details when formulating suggestions. Strange as it might seem the general formula sufficed provided the subject's mind lingered upon the idea conveyed in the words *in all respects*. Henceforward the principle of detailed suggestions was abandoned at Nancy. The above mentioned difficulty had vanished. Every morning and every evening the subject would concentrate upon a general formula, as if repeating a



litany. No attention to detail was needed. The simplest method proved also the most efficacious—a procedure so simple that at first scepticism naturally prevails as to its efficacy and its full value can be realised only by those who have actually used it upon themselves.

But we must make this reservation. The great majority of those who practise this form of autosuggestion have at the outset participated in some sitting of induced suggestion where the practitioner has gone into details and has formulated suggestions applying to all the troubles of which the patient has complained. When as in the case of the varicose ulcers some undisclosed affection has been cured we must doubtless admit that in the atmosphere of the sitting and under its influence a more or less unconscious association of ideas has been established in the mind of the subject between this particular trouble and the general form of suggestion. If the formula 'in all respects' is to be truly efficacious that formula must it would seem have been associated in the opening stage with all the details to which it may relate.

This implies that anyone who practises autosuggestion without having ever been subjected to induced suggestion (where the practitioner formulates details) will find it well to add something to the concentration of the morning and the evening in which he devotes himself to the general formula. In addition he should during the day from time to time produce a state of contentment by simple collectedness or by autohypnosis and should then let his mind review the detailed series of desired modifications. Only in obstinate cases will it be necessary to do this every day. But the subject will find the practice extremely useful whenever he has a few minutes to spare.\*

With training the attainment of these states will become increasingly easy. After a time the subject will find that he need merely close his eyes to secure a sufficient degree of these states.

\* As an alternative when time and opportunity are lacking in the daytime detailed suggestion may be practised on first waking in the morning and general suggestion the last thing at night.

For as Bonnet writes      One who is able to put himself into a more or less profound condition of autohypnotisation will soon cease to be dependent on any physical adjuvant when he wishes to enter this state and to become autosuggestible. After he has practised voluntary training for a few sittings he will probably be able in the fully waking state to master his thought to guide it to concentrate it to isolate himself completely from the outer world.

In this manner we may isolate ourselves more or less perfectly in a tram in a waiting room whenever and wherever we have nothing particular to do and we feel that boredom is imminent. Even without closing the eyes we shall be able to isolate ourselves in the street in a crowd during a country walk etc. Though at first we require to be surrounded with an atmosphere of calm this becomes less and less essential. In the end we shall find ourselves competent to isolate ourselves to some extent even in a tumultuous assembly and when the conditions are extremely unfavourable. When a man is prey to an idea the outer world no longer matters to him. He is in the state in which was Archimedes when he had while in his bath discovered his famous hydrostatic principle and in which he appeared in public having totally forgotten to put on his clothes the state in which was Ampère when, with a piece of chalk in his hand, he would walk behind a cab chalking on the back the details of the problem with which his mind was occupied without ever noticing that his blackboard was on the march. Such cases of spontaneous contention and a great many others that are less picturesque prove to us the possibility of the requisite isolation. We can produce it at will we must learn how to do this and how to stop the process when it threatens to become absurd or dangerous.

In a word without making the practice of inward isolation at odd times a matter of daily obligation without making it a task superadded to other tasks and increasing the burdens of the day we can encourage the practice of self isolation whenever suitable opportunities offer. However

rarely we are able to do this each time will be valuable as far as it goes. On the other hand when we feel that as a preliminary we must train ourselves in exercises of attention, we shall find it well for a time to do these exercises regularly.

But *regularly daily without a single exception* we must practise concentration in the morning and the evening. It must bear on the general and extremely simple formula ( *Day by day in all respects I get better and better* ). Each sitting will require a few minutes only. Through regular performance it will become a confirmed habit, and its technique will be steadily perfected. If even to a minimal extent we embrace concentration and suggestion themselves within the formula in all respects progress will infallibly occur.

If finally at any time during the day we should be seized by some physical pain or should be affected by some undesirable mental state (an obsession a phobia a disagreeable reminiscence or a gloomy foreboding etc) Coue, guided by experience advises the following course.

Attain collectedness in the best possible physical conditions as by sitting in a comfortable armchair motionless with muscles relaxed and eyes closed. Localising the suggestion so to speak to the matter in question we say (inaudibly if needs must but at least making the appropriate movements of articulation with tongue and lips) these simple words. It is passing off reiterating them rapidly until the trouble if not cured is at least sensibly relieved. A certain amount of improvement ought to be obtained in *every* case. Each time we utter the words we shall do well to pass the hand rapidly over the affected part (the forehead when the trouble is mental). According to the magnetisers these passes emit a healing fluid. However this may be the passes unquestionably aid in the fixation the materialisation, of our thoughts like the articulatory movements, they help to sustain it and by their monotony they tend to promote hypnotisation. It is in this light that Coue regards them and whatever may be their mode of action, their value is incontestable.

Toothache or headache however severe a coughing fit however violent, will almost invariably and whether passes are made or not yield to this apparently puerile proceeding. In one experienced in the method in a person accustomed to practise general suggestion every morning and every evening relief will ensue within a few minutes.

But here, as always where suggestion is concerned the finer shades are of the utmost importance. For example success would be far more dubious were we to employ the formula "It has passed off" or "I have no pain." The trouble being actually present bluntly contradicts the assertion each time it is made. On the other hand, the elastic formula "It is passing off" does not arouse an internal protest. Furthermore the words must be repeated very rapidly. There is no harm in gabbling. Coué tells us "If between our successive affirmations 'it is passing off' we allow an interval of several seconds to elapse there is time for us to think ten times over 'it is not passing off.' In that case we may be surprised to find that the trouble is getting worse instead of better. As we are pronouncing the words under our breath if this is necessary, but out loud if there is no hindrance to doing so we should be carried away by the whirlwind of their speed so that there is not a free moment for the contrary assertion. The beneficent thought must not allow the maleficent thought to get a word in edgewise."

When the pain or the undesirable mood has persisted despite our best endeavours we should renew the special suggestion just before we fall asleep at night using slumber as an aid to suggestion. When we wake next morning the benefit will be plain.

In like manner whenever we find a difficulty in going to sleep we should let the mind be swept away as it were by a torrent of words as we incessantly articulate the phrase "I am going to sleep"—having first assumed our favourite position for slumber and having forbidden ourselves to change it on any pretext. Above all must we be careful never to allow ourselves to think "*I want to*"

go to sleep The mere fact of invoking the will suffices to prohibit sleep and this for two reasons In the first place the law of reversed effort comes into operation, secondly the essential characteristic of sleep is relaxation and consequently sleep cannot be the outcome of an act of will since will is a state of tension Moreover we must not be weary in well doing we must not be satisfied with a couple of minutes practice of the method then breaking off with the naive intention of finding out whether we have gone to sleep Naturally we discover that we are not asleep and since we have deliberately put our selves into a suggestible condition we are now affected with a countersuggestion which nullifies the results of our previous labours

*The finer shades are of the utmost importance* Personal experience will teach us these shades which must be felt rather than understood and explained Early failures must be attributed to the fact that we have erred in some of the details and we must never allow ourselves to be discouraged After we have felt our way for a time we shall suddenly discover one day that mastery has come to us When a beginner complains that results are slow in their advent Coué is fond of saying if the patient is a woman Madam if I were to put a Lebel rifle into your hands you would probably have no idea how to use it But this would not mean that the rifle was at fault

*The finer shades are of the utmost importance* One of Coué's supreme merits is that he has grasped this fact A detail which proves his psychological acumen is the distinction he has established between the practice of general suggestion and the practice of special suggestion In the case of the latter as we have just pointed out he recommends that the formula should be uttered with the utmost possible speed should be gabbled in fact On the other hand the general formula for morning and evening use should he tells us be pronounced piously with all the words separately stressed and with special attention to the phrase in all respects At first sight

the distinction seems arbitrary. We are inclined to fancy that it is a deliberately introduced complication intended to strike the imagination by its very illogicality as do the bizarre prescriptions of charlatans. But this is a total misconception.

Indeed a little thought will convince us that nothing could be more logical than Cou  s advice. Though he fails to give an express reason for the distinction he draws the reason is not far to seek. The general formula (and above all the phrase in all respects ) is closely associated in our mind with the idea of all the desired ameliorations. If by a brief silence when a state of concentration prevails we leave the imagination free to follow up its own clues it will probably therefore get to work on the list of ameliorations. Now this is just what is wanted for thus we initiate a process which will readily be continued in the subconscious. Especially overnight just as in the case of the arithmetical problem do we initiate a suggestion which during sleep will ramify multiply develop the whole of its implicit content. In the intervals of silence between the repetitions of the formula the development of the schema is set in operation. We secure the formation of a *spontaneous* procession of images. For reasons with which we are now familiar this is preferable to a procession of images voluntarily induced and there will be less risk that the imagination will stray from the appointed path as it tends to do in those who are little accustomed to concentration.

When on the other hand special suggestion is being practised there is no such associated train of thought and errancy will be far more likely. Furthermore and above all since special suggestion is most commonly put in practice at times when the subject is actually suffering from some mental or physical trouble there is considerable risk that the idea of this trouble may slip into any interstices in our repetition of the formula of suggestion and may thus lead as we have explained to the very reverse of what is wanted.

We have dwelt upon this example to show how in the

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practice of the New Nancy School everything is based upon the most precise observation and upon the keenest psychological insight

The foregoing analyses may have aroused in the reader's mind an impression that autosuggestion is a very complicated affair. The mechanism of autosuggestion is indeed complex. But the operation of this machine is simple enough as the following summary of fundamental rules will show.

1 *Every morning and every evening betwixt sleep and waking practise concentration upon the formula of general suggestion ( Day by day in all respects I get better and better )*

2 *When during the waking hours you are unexpectedly assailed by some mental or physical trouble have recourse to the particular suggestion this is passing off. Should the trouble persist repeat this in the evening before going to sleep*

3 *As opportunity offers attain the state of contentment either through simple collectedness or through autohypnosis. Then call up as vividly as possible the image of the desired bodily and mental ameliorations*

4 *Cultivate the faculty of relaxation and the practice of collectedness (art imagination the habit of collectedness). Cultivate also the faculty of sustained attention (bodily and mental exercises regular exercises in learning by heart)*

Here we have all the essentials. By adopting them we may and should attain notable results though further advice will be given in the sequel. The most important of these four rules is the first which must never be broken. It is the simplest as well as the most indispensable. Let us add that the student must never forget the law of reversed effort. He must invariably pay heed to Coué's advice. Above all be careful never to let the will intervene in the practice of autosuggestion.

It is obvious that the method here prescribed is distinguished by its extreme simplicity from other methods now in vogue.

In view of this simplicity what estimate shall we form of other methods for which numerous and complex procedures are requisite? How far are these procedures likely to be of any value?

Let us consider an example which may help us to answer the question. Géraud Bonnet (op cit) among a number of prescriptions for autosuggestion gives the following

Get a transparent glass funnel holding from one to two pints

When all the preliminary conditions requisite for a good operation have been secured fill the funnel almost to the brim with some highly coloured fluid such as red wine

Place the stem of the funnel in an empty bottle having first plugged the stem with a good thickness of absorbent cotton wool in such a fashion that the flow is limited to a fine stream or the fluid even emerges drop by drop only

With a few preliminary trials and by packing the cotton wool more or less firmly you will be able to arrange that the funnel will take ten minutes fifteen minutes or half an hour to empty itself

Place the apparatus on a table and sit down opposite to it in a comfortable position one which you will be able to retain for a long time. You may rest your hands on your knees or on the table or you may rest your elbows on the table and your head on your hands. The bottle with the funnel should be quite near at a distance ranging from five to fifteen inches

Just before you settle down fill up the funnel and the fluid will begin to drip into the bottle

Keep your gaze fixed on the upper surface of the fluid in the funnel never permitting your attention to wander from this surface or from the curve which represents it. Gently but continuously the level falls and the curve which represents it insensibly diminishes until at last it reaches the top of the cotton wool plug and all the fluid has percolated

"While the descent is in progress your gaze gradually lowers moment by moment. You will feel a continuous



impulse to close your eyes but you must resist this impulse. Should it become too strong and interfere with your sight open the eyes very widely by lifting the upper lids.

If nevertheless the uneasiness proves too much for you desist and take a rest. Another time you will be able to continue longer and in the end you will find yourself able to go on gazing energetically until the close of the operation until all the liquid has percolated.

Throughout the sitting you must do your utmost to avoid noticing the noise which is made by the drip of the fluid into the bottle. This tends to distract your attention and makes the exercise difficult. If it becomes too importunate plug the ears with cotton wool.

After detailing a number of similar exercises Bonnet concludes as follows:

The foregoing exercises in which we have recourse to the sense of hearing and the sense of sight may unexpectedly eventuate in the involuntary production of the hypnotic state.

In fact Braid's fundamental method for inducing hypnotisation consisted in fixing the attention by the concentration of thought.

Now in all the exercises I have been describing and in all the analogous exercises we can imagine employing for the same purpose these conditions are realised, or at least the subject attempts to realise them.

It would seem therefore that the operation ought to terminate, or may possibly terminate in hypnotisation. There is no harm in that and the prospect need not greatly disturb us. Indeed we may rather be pleased for we can turn it to useful account.

Let us at once point out that the author displays a certain confusion when he is speaking of these exercises. What does he propose to educate? Is it the effort of sustained attention? Or is it on the other hand autohypnosis? Bonnet's objective is obviously the effort of attention. Nevertheless if the experiment should culminate in autohypnosis (and consequently in relaxation) this matters very little and may even be advantageous.

Such confusions throw the pupil off the track. They are the same as those made by the Americans in the use of the word concentration. The error identical in all cases lies in considering training in suggestion as training of the will. Hence the contradictions that ensue.

In practice it would be better to know precisely what is the aim of the particular exercise we are to undertake. That is why in our opinion the exercises must be simplified; that is why the exercises which keep the attention awake must be sharply distinguished from those which immobilise it in order to induce hypnosis. Among the former must be classed the exercises in memorisation recommended by Herbert Parkyn and it is these which we advise for the development of sustained voluntary attention. But for the development of autohypnosis we can use any sort of exercise in fixation. In that case however the more the will is in abeyance the more rapidly is hypnosis likely to ensue.

As a general rule therefore let us choose simple exercise. Nevertheless, we do not underrate the occasional value of those of a somewhat complicated character those for which comparatively elaborate preparations are needed. These seize the imaginations and often impress us in spite of ourselves just as do old wives' prescriptions. *People are inclined to disbelieve in the efficacy of anything simple* every doctor is well aware of this truth and every doctor takes it into account in his advice to his patients. All the same the retaining of complicated methods cannot be recommended except for simple minded persons, who would find it very difficult to understand the true mechanism of autosuggestion. The practice of elaborate exercises substitutes spontaneous suggestion for reflective suggestion for the patient imagines that the prescription does the work whereas the real agent is the imagination itself. It is much better to imbue our mind with the simple law which regulates autosuggestion and to put this law into practice with equal simplicity. But routinism is so prevalent and prejudice is often so powerful that many persons find it difficult to accept the law in all its simplicity.

There is one group of exercises which requires special mention, for they have been recommended in all ages as aids to the development of mental force. We find them already in the yoga of Hindustan and we encounter them once more in the teaching of the ultramodern American schools of autosuggestion. I refer to breathing exercises. Is their historical relationship to autosuggestion a mere chance a mere matter of tradition or has it a logical basis?

As most people know the method consists in the daily practice of deep breathing which may or may not be accompanied by movements of the limbs. Through training the subject becomes capable of holding his breath for a longer time and can maintain an interval between inspirations and expirations. It is recommended that suggestion should be practised simultaneously with the breathing exercise. We may quote Bonnet in this connection:

Let us suppose that we wish to rid our mind of a feeling of gloom. The opposite of gloom is cheerfulness. The suggestion should bear upon the idea. I am cheerful.

The phrase is simple. Suppose we desire to use respiratory movements of average depth. The movements of inspiration and expiration have approximately the same duration and are separated by very brief intervals. During inspiration the subject thinks 'I am' and during expiration 'cheerful'.

Since this operation entails very little fatigue, it may be repeated as often as you like, twenty times fifty times a hundred times until thought ceases or turns to something else or until an almost unconscious mechanism comes into play.

Deep breathing may likewise be practised with the same associations. But here since each phase of the complete respiration is greatly prolonged the entire autosuggestion 'I am cheerful' may be made during inspiration and repeated during expiration. A variant would be to do nothing in the way of suggestion during

the respiratory movements and to reserve the thought

I am cheerful for the apparent rest which terminates and follows expiration. In this case the subject must be careful to keep his mind a blank during expiration and inspiration.

There can be no question as to the physiological value of breathing exercises. Whatever promotes bodily well-being must obviously provide a solid foundation for mental vigour and it will consequently favour autosuggestion. But why among the numerous methods for developing the physique should breathing exercises have become specially associated with suggestion?

The reasons I think are easy to discover. In the first place the sensation of wellbeing which always follows the drawing of a deep breath unquestionably favours the working of any ameliorative suggestion. The images of vigour and health which we desire to evoke find a main stay in this feeling. Furthermore by its regular rhythm (of which the exercises make us aware) breathing exerts a stimulus analogous to that exerted by every rhythm that has a lulling influence—a stimulus which immobilises the attention and tends to induce hypnosis. Finally the relations between the faculty of attention and the function of breathing are well known. These considerations suffice to explain the suggestive value of respiratory exercises.

Herbert Parkyn goes further and believes that there is a large element of suggestion in the physiological value of the much belauded breathing exercises. If this be so the fact does not render the value any less real. In order to obtain still better results he recommends that respiratory exercises should be reinforced by the simultaneous practice of reflective suggestion.

Remember to employ autosuggestion while you exercise for you would not be taking the exercises unless you expected to accomplish something through them and the mind is such an important factor in bringing about the results you desire that you should direct your thoughts systematically and intelligently.

For instance if you are breathing to improve your general health use autosuggestions like the following

The air is one of the life essentials I am now breathing deeply and it feels so good to get this fresh air into my lungs I know I shall feel better for it Every deep breath stimulates the heart's action and in this way assures better nutrition to every cell in the body \*

My chief reason for analysing these various exercises has been the wish to show the reader how he can himself analyse the numerous exercises respiratory and other recommended in current manuals of autosuggestion What these manuals chiefly lack in most instances is grasp of principle and knowledge of method In the advice they give we always find more dross than gold there is invariably a quantity of rubbish to throw away When any particular exercise is recommended, we must ask what useful purposes it can serve (in promoting attention collectedness autohypnosis contention or concentration) Relying on the general principles formulated above we can approximately judge whether and to what extent the exercise is well adapted to attain its end

Above all avoid falling into a superstition about exercises and avoid an undue multiplicity of exercises We know that the practice of autosuggestion is simple and easy that it need not occasion any loss of time that everyone can and everyone should acquire the art The morning and evening concentration is the basis of the whole thing Exercises are no more than adjuvants doubtless of great value But we must be careful not to overestimate their importance

\* Op. cit. pp 126-7

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### EXAMPLES AND SPECIAL RULES

WE are now acquainted with the chief rules which must be observed during the deliberate practice of autosuggestion. In addition to morning and evening concentration we have referred to specialised suggestions which have to be formulated from time to time as need arises and to detailed suggestions which have to be run through the mind in series as opportunity offers during the course of the day.

The practice of general suggestion is simple enough. As regards particular suggestions on the other hand, as regards those suggestions of which general suggestion is a condensation it will be well to enter into some detail and to deal with concrete instances.

First of all what results are we entitled to aim at?

It may be affirmed that *reflective suggestion is of value in all domains where we have seen spontaneous suggestion at work*. In particular since the task will often be to uproot harmful spontaneous suggestions it is well to be aware as a matter of principle that *whatever suggestion has done suggestion can undo*. This is of great value from many points of view. We have seen that, in his first awkward attempts, the subject sometimes suggests to himself the very opposite of what he desires. This happens either from excess of effort, which sets the law of reversed effort in operation or else because between the beneficent affirmations, silences intervene during which the converse affirmation is more or less wittingly repeated. Some readers may take fright at this warning, and may at once renounce the idea of handling so dangerous a

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weapon which may explode in your face at the breech. But if whatever suggestion has done suggestion can undo the difficulty will be surmounted the danger will vanish and after a little practice the subject will be able to handle his weapon with perfect safety.

Let us add that the converse of the above principle does not hold good. It would be false to say that suggestion has been the cause of whatever suggestion can undo. We encounter various troubles some functional and some organic in which cures are daily effected by autosuggestion although they were in no way caused by an antecedent suggestion.

Whether the cause of the malady be or be not suggestive the first task of reflective suggestion will obviously be to counteract the evil regardless of its origin. But in this negative role of suggestion we must do our utmost to avoid using negative formulas. We must not say this or that will not recur for in doing so we call up once more the idea of the trouble which is to be dispelled, and tend to impress it on the mind side by side with the idea of cure. Thus as in the case of effort there will arise two conflicting suggestions which may neutralise one another more or less. We should employ by preference a positive and genuinely creative formula. The neurasthenic might say No longer shall I be less and less shall I be the victim of the gloomy thoughts of the phobias from which I have hitherto suffered. But he will do much better to say From to-day onwards, and increasingly day by day thoughts will flow into my mind which will be unlike the old thoughts they will not necessarily be light thoughts unduly lively which would do outrage to my sufferings they will be ideas of a serious complexion, but ideas full of certitude, confidence, and hope. The tubercular patient might say My system is resisting the disease the microbes are becoming less numerous every day and are being eliminated. I am not so short of breath sleeplessness is less persistent the cough is not so troublesome there is less blood in my sputum, the night sweats are less frequent and less copious, and so on.

But he will be wiser to say ' Day by day I gain strength and feel stronger I breathe more easily more deeply, and with greater freedom I have better appetite a large appetite an irresistible appetite and I assimilate my food perfectly I sleep better and better more soundly falling asleep directly I put my head on the pillow my slumbers are unbroken so that even a thunderstorm cannot wake me : thanks to this improved assimilation to this sleep to this spontaneously deep breathing my health is being reestablished my blood grows richer my white corpuscles become more numerous and are increasingly active Each day I am capable of a little more muscular exertion but I never overdo it after taking exercise I find that my skin remains dry like that of a person in good health Now I turn to the deeper cause of the trouble this cause being attacked the effect will disappear and *all the symptoms whatever their kind* will be relieved whether I am aware of their existence or not

To sum up whenever the mention of details would involve the use of a negative formula it will be better to rest content with a general formula To this, therefore we are often limited in dealing with symptoms

In other words if in actual fact reflective suggestion must often be negative its mode of expression must remain as positive as possible and the logical distinction between positive and negative suggestions may be ignored in practice This distinction cannot provide us with a principle of classification In the examples now to be given we shall avail ourselves of the classification we have already used in the case of spontaneous suggestions speaking of them as representative suggestions affective suggestions and active or motor suggestions

*In the representative domain* every one of us should from the first secure appreciable results in the development of the *memory* : We should never say to ourselves

All these results have been obtained in tubercular patients.

In all the examples which follow the reader will do well to collate them with the descriptions of the corresponding spontaneous suggestions



'I have no memory I am losing my memory I have reached the age when memory begins to fail We should affirm that our memory in general is excellent that the special memory we are in search of is just coming back that we shall always remember what we wish to remember without any trouble We shall not allow a failure of memory, or two or three failures in brief succession to disconcert us and we shall never permit ourselves to regard them as signs that our memory is decaying The trend of contemporary psychology is to confirm the theory that all our memories are stored up in the subconscious even those memories which seem to have been utterly lost In profoundly hypnotised subjects we are able to observe the revival the *ecphory* (as the biologist Semon followed by Auguste Forel terms it) of buried memories But that which heterosuggestion can achieve in induced sleep autosuggestion can likewise achieve to a considerable extent

All the *intellectual faculties* can be developed by suggestion Let us be careful to avoid being led astray by fallacious physiological considerations William James pointed out that the most trivial thought must affect brain structure inasmuch as it left an imprint on the brain *Attention* above all can be greatly developed and facilitated by suggestion It is one of the conditions of suggestion but becomes in its turn an effect of suggestion thus an alternating cycle is set up rendering rapid progress possible If at the outset we have an unduly strong tendency towards mind wandering regular practice will enable us by degrees but easily to correct this fault

Nay more In cases where in former days it was considered necessary to make a great effort to fix the attention, as in learning by heart and in other mental work we now realise that better results can often be obtained by suggestion than by effort We have seen

given in Part I Chapters III to VIII For the successful practice of reflective suggestion, we must call up the memory of the mental state that prevails during the initiation of the corresponding spontaneous suggestion and must realise an analogous condition

how the subconscious can solve a problem during sleep. Let us profit by this observation. Practical experience will convince us that by concentrating the mind on a question we shall to a great extent spare ourselves the effort which would otherwise have been requisite. We shall initiate subconscious activities and the work will then go on spontaneously within us. In what cases and to what an extent will this substitution be possible? That is a matter for the future to decide.

Artists are aware by implication at least that their inspirations come from the subconscious and to evoke them they encourage conditions of outcropping. But they are apt to leave to hap and hazard the choice of the means by which these states are to be induced. Often they ascribe to the means an importance which in reality belongs only to the resultant state—a state which might have been brought about by very different means. Hence the fetichism often displayed by artists for tobacco alcohol narcotics and intoxicants of all kinds debauchery. But the desirable thing is not the alcohol the tobacco or the debauchery in itself the real object of their quest is the outcropping of the subconscious which attends the intoxication. Some artists discover this instinctively or by chance, and are thus enabled to find inspiration without the use of methods that entail physical ruin. These are the greatest of their tribe. The utilisation of natural sleep after a period of mental concentration is peculiarly fruitful. Victor Hugo was well aware of this and his mode of life in Guernsey has become famous. He never wrote a line in the afternoon. At this time of day he went for a drive immersed in profound meditation. Hypnotised as it were by haunting thoughts the poet would let his mind range amid his unfinished visions. Visibly cut off from his surroundings he would hardly exchange a word with anyone. The work thus initiated went on during sleep. At five in the morning he was seated at his writing table ready to record upon paper the poem which was now ready in his mind.

A poet whose days were fully occupied in earning a

livelihood by prosaic means (he was a commission agent) gave me the following account of his methods of work

The idea of a poem comes into my head I am careful to make no attempt to write it for the moment But after six in the evening when I am back in my own room I isolate myself I plunge myself into a kind of hypnosis I am emotionally stirred and the condensation of the poetic images begins I wait another twenty four hours On the morrow when I have a moment to myself I think of my poem—in the street as I go about my business At six o'clock when I am once more alone in my room my poem is ready for me and I write it

As far as *opinions* are concerned the role of reflective suggestion must be mainly negative It will be a self control a door keeper to the mind warding off the intrusion of ready made opinions It will aim at keeping reflection and judgment on the alert It will try to save us from moral contagion above all during epidemic seasons during times when strong collective emotion or collective passion favours collective suggestion—as happens during revolution and in war-time when opinions are so much influenced by suggestion that entire nations viewed from a detached standpoint have the aspect of gigantic lunatic asylums so that experts have with good reason described a belligerents psychosis \* The worst feature of suggestions of this sort is that like all suggestions they have a teleology of their own so that the suggested opinion generates in the subject's mind excellent reasons for its own justification Among intellectuals these reasons are built up into a system which has a connected and logical semblance Like the sufferers from major hysteria, persons holding such opinions lie in perfect good faith A typical example is furnished by the celebrated manifesto of the ninety three German intellectuals issued in 1914 This and similar instances serve to show the extent to which we are all exposed to such epidemics and how essential it is that a preventive countersuggestion should

\* See Jacques Mesnil, *Note d'un psychiatre (demain)* (Geneva, 1916) Auguste Forel *La psychanalyse et la guerre* (Le Carmel, Geneva, 1917)

stand sentry over our judgment In 1796 a period of intense political ferment Goethe wrote Merely in order to live I try to escape altogether from the spirit of my time

The suggestion of representative states wherein is implicit the belief in some particular objective reality (opinions judgments sensations) cannot fail from the point of view of truth to be positively harmful As already pointed out if I convince myself by autosuggestion that the earth is square it is true that I believe it, but it is not true that the earth is square Consequently in this domain the role of suggestion must chiefly be one of countersuggestion of prevention of sentry duty Unless indeed we are prepared to admit that certain opinions though lacking adequate objective foundation are none the less useful are necessary to life and must therefore be autosuggested. *Fiat vita pereat veritas!* The theory has its interest but this is not the place for its discussion Speaking generally it would seem that truth is a good thing and that hallucinations and false opinions are undesirable <sup>1</sup>

*In the affective sphere* the role of suggestion must likewise in many cases be negative Thus in all varieties of physical pain we have to employ it as an *anaesthetic* We may lay down as a principle that it should always be possible in this manner to obtain a result total or partial Certain very keen or obstinate pains such as toothache and headache are among those in which complete success may be attained in a very brief time Having achieved relief from pain we can then continue the use of suggestion as a preventive so that the trouble shall not recur either on the morrow or subsequently

*Hunger* is easy to control. If we are compelled to fast we can neutralise the inconveniences of abstinence

Cf. Paul Emile Lévy I suggest to myself that I shall have erroneous ideas. The next day I have them and my mind is exclusively filled with them so that I have to discontinue my work.

Complete anaesthesia can be secured although the caries persists.

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Not only can we annul the pangs of hunger but in addition we can minimise the accompanying symptoms of exhaustion. Should appetite be capricious we can regulate it by the use of conditional suggestion affirming that we shall feel hungry whenever we sit down to a meal regardless of any stress of emotion such as formerly would cause loss of appetite. When mealtimes come our hunger will be irresistible but we shall never be hungry between meals.

If we bear *cold* or *heat* badly we can suggest to ourselves that we shall bear it better in future and we can stress these suggestions as winter or summer draws near. We must forbid ourselves to be afraid of heat or cold for to be afraid is per se a noxious suggestion.

With regard to heat and cold we shall adopt an offensive and independent attitude we shall no longer consider it necessary to safeguard ourselves against them by cumbersome paraphernalia. We shall be able to wear the same clothing or nearly the same all the year round and to dress lightly on the whole. This result will be secured by degrees and will confirm us in the belief that we are far more independent of external conditions than we had fancied. The thought is in itself an excellent suggestion.

We shall master *fatigue*. In the course of hard work we shall postpone from hour to hour the onset of weariness. But we must do this *without effort* for otherwise we should be heaping up trouble for ourselves and in the end we should not be simply fatigued but utterly worn out. When walking we can turn to account the regular rhythm of our footsteps as a lulling influence inducing a slight degree of hypnosis which will facilitate the suggestion of non fatigue. A workman engaged at a noisy machine can even use the rhythm of this machine for the same purpose if the circumstances be such as to permit a moment's immobilisation of attention.

We shall easily be able to avoid undesirable *emotions* such as anger and fear and also the diminutives of fear known as *phobias* including bashfulness and stage fright. Even when we have suffered from such emotions almost

ever since we can remember we shall speedily learn how to control them. As previously indicated the sufferer should direct his attention more especially to the movements that accompany these emotions. If we have been bashful we shall suggest to ourselves that henceforward we shall be able to look people in the face to speak without faltering. If we fear the dark if we are afraid of certain animals we shall forbid ourselves to shiver from fright at the encounter or to make any of the other gestures of fear. If for instance toads are the enemy we shall go cautiously. We shall begin by saying that next time we see a toad we shall not turn away our eyes. On the contrary we shall look the bugbear fearlessly in the face. When this has been successfully achieved we shall order ourselves on the next occasion to make several steps towards the toad to lean over it to examine it closely. Some persons suffer from phobia of one of the domesticated animals dogs cats or horses. They must set before themselves as the final goal of suggestion (a goal they must only attempt to reach by easy stages) the acquirement of a fondness for the animals which hitherto they could not endure a pleasure in caressing these animals. When they have gone thus far—and they must persevere till then—they may feel assured that they have made a great step in self control and a great advance in the practice of autosuggestion.

But if there are undesirable emotions there are also desirable emotions. We know that emotion can favour suggestion in one direction just as well as in another. While it may be difficult to arouse emotions by reflective suggestion since an emotion must be of spontaneous origin we can at any rate increase our emotional susceptibility can increase it as much as we think advisable leaving life to mould out of this plastic material the particular emotions which we have not specified in our formula of suggestion. We may however usefully affirm that whatever emotions we feel shall be desirable emotions.

Suggestion can play its part in regulating the whole of our affective life. To a considerable extent we can

arouse in our mind certain *sentiments* and we can suppress other sentiments. All ethical systems all religions prescribe such a regulation of the affective life, but in so far as in the attempt to carry out the prescription we lean on voluntary effort we are soon convinced of our impotence and we draw the conclusion. This cannot be done to order —It can however be done to order but through the instrumentality of a mental attitude which is based upon suggestion and not upon the will. It is by calling up the good sentiment that we pave the way for its realisation and thereby at the same time we invite the bad sentiment to yield up its place. If when we wish to expel an undesirable sentiment we confine ourselves to the use of a negative formula the chances are that we shall fail. *Veni Creator* is in all respects a far more potent exorcism than *Vade retro Satana*. We get rid of evil by filling its place with good.

We summon joy to us we create joy for ourselves. Goethe knew this for he wrote. We must laugh before we become happy and if joy be not complaisant we must compel her to yield. In these words Goethe likewise reveals his realisation that the expression of a sentiment calls up this sentiment. It is the counterpart of what he wrote on the same topic in *Werther*.\*

Is there any need to dwell upon the advantage that may be derived from reflective suggestion in the mastery of our tastes our inclinations and our passions? 'It is useless to dispute about tastes or about colours' is a common saying. People seem to imagine that tastes whether in food or in other things are inalterable. But we who have learned the part played in their formation by spontaneous suggestion know that they are nothing of

\* *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* Part I Chapter V —Cf. Marden op cit p. 141. I know of a woman who was prone to fits of depression of the blues who conquered them by forcing herself to sing bright joyous songs, and to play lively inspiring airs on the piano whenever she felt an attack coming on —Ibid. pp 144-5. A physician who is a nerve specialist advises his patients to try to smile under all circumstances. Keep on smiling just try turning up the corners of your mouth. See how it makes you feel, regardless of your mood.

the kind There is in fact no better discipline in reflective suggestion than to acquire control over all our tastes to overcome our repulsions until we have taught ourselves to be fond of things which we would not bear to look at even in a picture to get the better of our little weaknesses for this or that coveted dish We ought to find no difficulty in liking everything that is edible our stomachs would be all the better for it If we are compelled to adopt a strict regimen (which will rarely be necessary when we know how to turn the forces of suggestion to good account) we shall learn to like what is good for us and to have no longings for anything that will disagree with us If we have to take a medicine with an unpleasant taste we shall suggest to ourselves that the taste is agreeable (In many cases this victory over ourselves will prove much more profitable to us than the actual taking of the medicine) In such instances we can apply the method of special suggestion shortly before the food has to be eaten or the medicine to be swallowed When the repulsion proves difficult to overcome we may employ suggestion simultaneously with the taking of the dose which we find so offensive We must close our eyes so as not to see it and to help us to attain collectedness If what we have to swallow is a draught we shall drink it down to the accompaniment of reiterated mental affirmations that it is really quite indifferent to us At a later stage we can teach ourselves to like it We must not try to get on too quickly

*Passions* which have struck deep root in our being are far more difficult to extirpate I do not mean that suggestion is incompetent to conquer the greater passions But what must be foreseen is that after the first success the subject will be apt to regret that his life has been narrowed His passion has bulked so largely in his existence that when its voice has been silenced, he finds himself in a disconcerting and distressing void He is loath to take another step forward and even if he should persist in formulating his suggestion, he does so with the secret wish that the suggestion may fail A safer way is to have a better passion



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to substitute for the one that has proved dangerous. Still more advantageous is it to sublimate the dangerous passion to cultivate it while transforming it. Such is the course chosen by the impassioned devotees of art, religion and duty.

Suggestion is able to overcome the keenest mental pain. But here too the sufferer who has been relieved is sometimes inclined to regret the loss of his suffering. He has a sense of vacancy. Previously his suffering was intense, he longed to be freed from it, he was single-hearted in that longing, and he cast no glance backwards. But now, after deliverance, he regrets the chains that galled him so bitterly, for their very torture made him feel alive, saved him from an emptiness which seems like non-existence. Perhaps the subject has been mourning a lost one. When his grief has been assuaged by suggestion, he feels that the dead is being robbed of the due meed of sorrow. Such a case was seen at the Nancy clinic. Of course, this remorse may be another trick of the subconscious, a new torture substituted for the old, in order to fill the void, which is the worst torture of all.

To sum up, suggestion can assuage mental pain. But is such assuagement always desirable? Here we enter upon a very different question, and it is one which lies beyond the scope of the present work.

*To the active and motor sphere* belong the suggestions that will be most frequently employed.

We have pointed out the part played by suggestion in the formation of habits. One of the leading roles of reflective suggestion is the acquirement of good habits and the overcoming of bad habits. For the latter purpose we must once more, as far as possible, use suggestion in its positive form, by suggesting a new habit to be substituted for the habit we desire to suppress. Let us quote Coué:

To give you a clear understanding of the way in which suggestion acts in the treatment of moral defects, I will make a comparison. Let us suppose the brain to be a

board into which have been driven brads representing the ideas the habits the instincts which determine our actions. If we perceive that in any individual there exists a bad idea a bad habit a bad instinct—in a word a bad brad let us take another brad representing the good idea the good habit the good instinct let us place its point directly over the head of the bad brad and strike on it a single blow with a hammer in other words let us make a suggestion. The new brad will be driven a little way in a millimetre perhaps and the old one will be driven out for a corresponding distance. At each fresh blow of the hammer at each fresh suggestion that is to say the new brad will enter for an additional millimetre and the bad one will emerge to the same extent. After a certain number of blows the old brad will have been completely dislodged and the new one will have taken its place.<sup>1</sup>

If we attack the bad habit with a negative formula suggestion must aim at keeping the attention on the alert in case the habit should have become unconscious. For example one who bites his nails can teach himself by suggestion to become aware of what he is doing directly he raises the fingers to the mouth. Then he can stop himself. To be sure of a successful result he must also suggest to himself that the bad habit shall become distasteful.

When we treat a bad habit by induced suggestion we commonly suggest to the subject that he will be totally unable to yield to his inclination. A young man of eighteen who had been a nail biter since early childhood begged me to cure him by suggestion. I suggested to him that throughout the day he would be positively unable to raise his hand to his mouth. In the evening he wished to pick one of his teeth with his finger. He was unable to do so and had to use the point of a pencil. From this day forwards he practised autosuggestion the habit was cured.

Impotence is not a desirable ideal to set before ourselves

<sup>1</sup> Coué, *op. cit.* pp. 20, 21

nevertheless in the cases under consideration our suggestions must take this form We must not say I shall be able to resist temptation in future We must say

I shall no longer be tempted Should I wish to regain a taste for my habit I shall find that I am unable to do so \* This form of suggestion economises effort

Certain habits are not fully under the control of the voluntary muscles but the involuntary muscular movements on which they depend are perfectly amenable to suggestion This is the case with tics or habit-spasms for instance and with cough In such cases we need not hesitate to suggest impotence saying My tic will become less frequent and soon even should I wish to simulate it I shall be unable to do so In the case of cough we should not say Henceforward I shall be able to *check* my cough We should say The cough will spontaneously subside and in a little while I shall be unable to cough however much I may try to do so if there should be mucus in the passages which requires to be expectorated I shall be able to expectorate it without provoking a paroxysm of cough Such complete mastery over coughing is in most cases easy to secure even in the advanced stages of consumption Specialists have long since noted that certain consumptives do not cough Since for tubercular patients cough is always a noxious habit some doctors forbid their patients to cough This is quite a mistaken prescription unless the patient is provided with the means which will enable him to cure his cough unless he is taught how to practise autosuggestion Voluntary effort not to cough is an absurdity There is a German sanatorium in which a Prussian discipline prevails Here the rules permit the patients to cough once or twice a day but the consumptives are punished if they cough more frequently They make convulsive efforts to stifle the paroxysms and these efforts are quite as exhausting as the cough But the desired result could easily have been secured by autosuggestion

When the habitual action is more or less pleasurable,

we must not be over sanguine as to an immediate definitive cure above all if the habit is of long standing Benoist Hanappier puts the case very well when he explains that if we expect too much in these cases, we are risking a failure and that every failure is a suggestion of impotence for the future He writes

' Do you crave for a cigarette? Say to yourself I shall not light one for half an hour ' And keep your word Do not attempt to go too quickly Do not begin by saying I shall wait two hours You would be very likely to give way to temptation before the two hours were up This failure would discourage you would lead you to distrust yourself would make you lose ground Do not imitate those who training themselves for a long walk suddenly double their daily distance and overtire themselves This is to defeat the object of training whose method it is to enable us *without fatigue* to take longer and longer walks '

We have seen how suggestion can command the events which make up our destiny can command them through the instrumentality of the sayings and doings inspired by the subconscious We have learned in what sense it is true that our star is within us

O S Marden writes (op cit, p 158) " Your whole thought current must be set in the direction of your life purpose Our mental attitude our hearts desire is our perpetual prayer which nature answers He alone is inferior who admits inferiority who voluntarily accepts a position of inferiority because he thinks himself unlucky The world belongs to him who conquers t Good things belong to those who make them their own by the strength of their desire by the firmness of their will '

Our only criticism of the American evangelist s precepts is that his use of the words desire and will betrays inadequate analysis We may desire and will but we shall do so vainly if we imagine or fear ourselves to be unable Our imagination and our thought must tend in the same direction as our desire and our will Now

\* Benoist Hanappier professor at the university of Nancy En marge de Nietzsche Figuière Paris 1912.

this depends on ourselves on the suggestions we make to ourselves

But it is above all in the treatment of disease that in sufficient appeal has hitherto been made to the power of suggestion. For a considerable period it has been usual to employ heterosuggestion to regularise the bodily functions to relieve constipation to promote sleep to cure amenorrhoea to help digestion to prevent nervous palpitation. This is often supposed to be the last word in psychotherapeutics. In some instances good results have even been secured in organic disease. However, the general belief is that as far as organic disease is concerned success is quite exceptional. It is thought that there are after all not many cases for which treatment by suggestion is advisable.

This would be true if we had no resource but heterosuggestion. But autosuggestion as we have seen produces modifications as profound and lasting as those that have hitherto been produced by heterosuggestion. By the methodical use of autosuggestion we may hope to attain results greatly surpassing the marvels of hypnotism. This is no mere hypothesis. Or if it be a hypothesis it is one which is daily being verified. The observed cures have been obtained by the regular practice of autosuggestion. It is true that the starting point has been a heterosuggestion made by the practitioner. That is why we reserve the description of these cases for Part III, which treats of Induced Suggestion. There we shall describe the methods employed in the Nancy clinic. But successful results are only secured *when the subject regularly practises autosuggestion*. Induced suggestion as we shall explain has served merely to train the patient in autosuggestion. It is to the influence of the latter that success must be ascribed.

Moreover there are persons who having attended a single lecture or a course of lectures having read a well written pamphlet or having witnessed a sitting, have grasped the principle have put it into practice and thereupon (without being subjected to preliminary hetero

suggestion) have secured results parallel to those we shall describe

Everyone can verify the efficacy of the method for him self by applying it in minor troubles thus ascertaining if he has grasped the correct procedure You wish to stop a haemorrhage nose bleeding for instance? If this nose bleeding ordinarily lasts a quarter of an hour with intermissions you should readily be able to secure the formation of a good clot and the arrest of the haemorrhage within two or three minutes Attain collectedness and make use of some form of special suggestion You can place a watch in front of you and keep your eyes on the second hand, having fixed a time in your mind when the bleeding is to stop You *ought* to be successful and if you fail it will be because your method is still faulty because you have overlooked some detail In like manner if you are subject to colds in the head which usually last a week suggest to yourself that the trouble will pass over in four days At a later stage you can forbid the catarrh to develop at all You can dictate to an abscess the moment when it is to burst *Without any other treatment than* autosuggestion you can cure pimples warts varicose ulcers eczema The first results will encourage you and will induce you to apply suggestion in more and more serious troubles never allowing yourself to be discouraged by a failure You will say to yourself that *no one knows the limit to the power of suggestion that suggestion has cured cases supposed to be incurable* that it must be tried in positively all cases

The regulation of *sleep* is a most valuable exercise for sleep is exceptionally responsive to suggestion Since it is a relaxation it can only be hindered not favoured by any *effort* to promote it Sleep is very ready to obey suggestion If we fail to summon sleep at will there must be something wrong with our method Perhaps we are making an effort at the time we formulate our suggestion As soon as we are successful we may be sure that we have done away with effort and that our method is now correct

Henceforward we shall be able to go to sleep almost instantaneously We shall accurately prescribe the hour of waking We shall prohibit nightmare We shall even be able to direct the course of our dreams We shall forbid ourselves to be awakened by any noise however violent unless a real danger threatens On the other hand we can suggest to ourselves that we shall awaken in response to stimuli which ordinarily are insufficient to rouse us that we shall be awakened by the slightest cry of a child or by the least sound from a sick person (one who need not actually be watched or rather one whom we can watch even when we are asleep) that we shall be awakened by a dream by some thought that comes during sleep in response to a question formulated overnight In a word nothing is more sensitive to suggestion than sleep It is precisely for this reason that we have to walk warily If our method be faulty we shall readily initiate a countersuggestion and the result will be the very reverse of what we desire If we suggest to ourselves that we shall sleep soundly and shall awaken at a definite time with the half acknowledged thought that this waking will require a continued effort of attention our sleep is likely to be troubled, and we may repeatedly awaken before the time But if we can suppress the half acknowledged thought we shall sleep soundly and shall awaken at the appointed hour without any fatigue It is obvious that the regulation of sleep is preeminently a matter in which attention to minor shades of detail is of the first importance That is why it is such excellent practice to acquire the mastery of sleep When we have done so we can expect great things from ourselves in the way of suggestion

For the attainment of the results above described and of others yet more striking it is not necessary to have been subjected to induced suggestion An intelligent person one able to throw off the routinist scepticism of his everyday environment can do all that is requisite alone and unaided

A man named Jacquemin a chemist at Malzéville near Nancy, had suffered for a long time from chronic

rheumatism Coué who did not know him personally though he had treated Jacquemin's daughter received from him one day the following letter I have had a wonderful success in the use of your method on myself I suffered from rheumatic pains in the legs so that it was difficult for me to get about I treated myself by saying several times a day and at night just before going to sleep

There is nothing the matter with me I can walk quite well etc I at once began to improve and in a few days I had completely recovered I should tell you that I was theoretically convinced of the value of autosuggestion so that this good result did not come to me as a surprise The case is by no means exceptional I have chosen it because the rapidity of the cure is peculiarly typical and because the patient's profession is a guarantee of his power for accurate observation



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### AUTOSUGGESTION AND MORAL ENERGY

FROM all that we have said concerning the practice of reflective suggestion one essential idea must have emerged. It is that autosuggestion must not be confounded as it is so often confounded with the will. This is not merely a theoretical error it is a practical error as well for autosuggestion will not bear its full fruit unless it is formulated with a minimum of effort. Here we have the chief discovery of the New Nancy School.

I do not wish to imply that the earlier manuals of autosuggestion those that have failed to grasp this principle are for that reason devoid of value. But the most fertile pages in such books are those in which the author breaking the rigidity of his erroneous system resumes contact with the reality even at the risk of self contradiction. Bonnet, for instance in his *Précis d'autosuggestion volontaire* writes incidentally as follows

If it were not for certain persons an invitation to laziness we might advise people to work little and to rest a great deal.

This is but the paradoxical expression of the truth on which we have to insist. The work of suggestion goes on *in the subconscious* and has nothing to do with the *conscious* effort which presides over the will. We may say that suggestion is a form of will but of *subconscious will*.

Proportionally to its results this subconscious labour seems to induce much less fatigue than the work which is the outcome of conscious effort—unless indeed in the former case astonished by the results we fancy ourselves to have been wearied by the stupendous task which seems

to have been performed. As a general rule suggestion appears to fatigue us no more than sleep with its dreams fatigues us. Yet sleep with its dreams represents a considerable amount of work but work in which voluntary effort is reduced to a minimum as in suggestion itself. This harmonises with the teachings of contemporary physiology.

'In reflex contractures there is no perceptible fatigue. In hysterical patients such contractures may last for an indefinite period without the patient being aware of any feeling of fatigue. The cause of fatigue is voluntary effort and not the mere muscular contraction.'

Our state of mind at the moment when we perform an autosuggested action is not a state of volition not a state of tension. The suggested act surges up from the depths of our being whereas the voluntary act emanates from the superficial strata of consciousness. The condition must rather be compared to what Beaunis terms *somnambulist vigil* the state in which a posthypnotic suggestion is carried out. As an exercise in autosuggestion we may tell ourselves overnight that on the morrow at some specified hour we must without fail perform one or more of those trifling actions which we are apt to forget owing to their lack of interest—things which people try to remind themselves to do by tying a knot in the pocket-handkerchief—the purchase of a box of matches the trying on of some new clothes and the like. We shall really have succeeded in conveying the desired suggestion if next day at the appointed hour the idea of the proposed action suddenly comes into the mind as if someone had whispered it to us. Still better will it be if when we are out walking we find ourselves *without having consciously willed it*, at the door of the right shop.

Autosuggestion therefore may be said to be practically at the antipodes of the ordinary will. Does this imply that it is 'an invitation to laziness' that it turns us

\* Charles Richet, *Physiologie des muscles et des nerfs* Paris 1882

away from healthy activity that it slackens our energy ?  
Nothing of the kind

Abramowsky head of the laboratory in the Warsaw Psychological Institute has conducted a series of interesting experiments from which he concludes that *the energy manifested by anyone during life is in direct ratio with his power for plunging himself into a condition of auto hypnosis* :

In these experiments the subject has as far as he is able to inhibit the psychogalvanic reflex His hand is so placed that the slightest muscular movement will lead to the passage of an electric current and the consequent deflection of a galvanometric needle The stronger the movement the greater the deflection of the needle A sudden noise such as a gunshot or a shout or a flash of light will arouse an emotion and the galvanometer will measure the intensity of this emotion In a first series of experiments the subject is asked to yield to his impulse In a second series he is asked to resist to control his emotion to inhibit his reflex muscular response A comparison is made between the galvanometric record in the former case and in the latter In certain subjects, the amplitude of the deflection is always considerably less when voluntary inhibition has been at work and we may say that in such persons inhibition has been successful, that they are really masters of themselves Abramowsky questions them as to their mental state during the experiment and he finds a general agreement as to the replies The subject isolates himself in the thought of the test in the thought of its successful performance he makes a mental void round this idea In a word, he is in a state of autohypnosis and concentration Now it appears that in ordinary life these same persons are peculiarly energetic exceptionally gifted in respect of self mastery

In other subjects on the other hand in those who display a feebler morale in ordinary life there is no marked

\* Abramowsky Etudes expérimentales sur la volonté Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique 1915

difference in the amplitude of the galvanometric deflection in the two series of experiments. Nay more *it sometimes happens that the amplitude of deflection is regularly greater in the second series of experiments than it was in the first*. Some of the subjects therefore do the very reverse of what they wish. Desiring to inhibit the muscular reaction they increase it. It seems to me that Abramowsky has paid less attention to this singular fact than it deserves. The experiments ought to be repeated with the special aim of elucidating the matter. I am confident that here will be found an experimental verification of the law of reversed effort and a way of measuring its effects. What we already know of the working of this law justifies the inference that those who came badly out of the test must have made a great effort to succeed but must have been full of fear that they would fail.

Abramowsky's experiments are of great interest as far as they go for they show that those who can best realise autohypnosis (the optimum condition for autosuggestion) are likewise the most energetic.

Furthermore the same phenomenon is verified every day by persons who practise autosuggestion with intelligence.

In this connection let me quote the autobiographical record penned by a young woman at the Fontenay aux Roses training college to whom Coué had taught autosuggestion.

It is above all in the mental sphere that I have been able to note such marvellous results. I am now far less subject than of old to lassitude low spirits despondency. Sometimes these moods return for one often cherishes gloom though one knows it to be harmful and depressing. That is why I think it difficult to act upon oneself as far as this matter is concerned. A word from another has far more effect and is practically indispensable.

'Turning to a different subject, I can without fatigue do twice as much work as before. During the vacation I have been able to get through two quite extensive tasks such as a year ago I should never have attempted. This

year I systematised my work and said I can do it all what I am undertaking is materially possible and must therefore be morally possible consequently I ought not to experience and shall not experience discouragement hesitancy annoyance or slackness'

Having thus persuaded myself I found myself in the condition ordinarily described in the books as the outcome of suggestion the condition in which a stronger will acts upon a weaker

Nothing could stop me nothing could prevent my doing what I had planned to do you might almost have said that things were done by themselves without the slightest effort on my part If through some accident I was unable to get to work until a few minutes past the appointed time I felt a discomfort which did not pass off until I could begin the allotted task I am still quite astonished at myself When I return to college I shall be able to resume my studies there to the greatest possible advantage

A few weeks later she wrote again

I cannot postpone writing to you once more I feel that I must let you know how deeply I am indebted to you During the holidays you initiated me into the practice of your invaluable method When I left you to come here and to finish my studies my rebellious memory was a trifle improved But above all you had restored my self-confidence You had set me free'

I have an indomitable will and I have hitherto succeeded in whatever I have undertaken but at the cost of how much mental tension! I have just delivered two lectures and much of their success is owing to you When preparing them I was able to retain a calmness of mind which was practically unknown to me in similar circumstances before You have set me free in relation to myself and you have thus enabled me to realise my life better to make it what I wish it to be I used often to say to myself What is the use of this scholastic life when compared with real life with its difficulties and its serious problems? Why would one bother one's head with all this bookish stuff? And yet, I could not help

worrying Naturally I worried the more, the more I tried not to

You have set me free because despite my best efforts (or rather because of my efforts) I did not know how to live in the present I was continually endeavouring to look ahead to strain my will that I might foresee difficulties and go out to meet them I could never think of those I love without dreading that they might be taken from me prematurely and might die any day I was intensely distressed at the inadequacy of my attempts to help those with whom I lived in close association But you have given me the wisdom I lacked or at least have shown me how to acquire it by degrees I feel that I am more fully mistress of myself Above all I have been able to instil into two of my companions the wisdom that is so essential to a useful and harmonious existence As for my memory it remains untrustworthy and rebellious at times But I suffer less and less in this way and I can be patient

Doubtless you have treated and cured cases just as serious as mine But persons whose heart is in their work find pleasure even in small results The least thought that they have been helpful to others entitles them to noble and pure-minded gratification That is why I venture to trespass on your valuable time in order to express my feeling of all that I owe you

P S —There are few Mondays and Fridays when I fail to recall your long days of devotion You can hardly believe how greatly I am comforted and strengthened by your example \*

Here are some additional instances

At Neufchâteau Vosges I had occasion to teach autosuggestion to two sisters one sixteen years of age the other seven They continued to practise the method after I had gone away and recently I received the following letter from their mother

'She [the elder girl] wanted to get her certificate of competence in English I thought that the happenings

\* Letters published in the Bulletin Ecole de Nancy 1913 and 1914

of the moment<sup>2</sup> would weaken her resolve or would at least induce her to postpone its execution. Nothing of the sort. We were informed that there was practically no risk in the sea passage and she preferred to go now rather than wait for a few months before attaining the desired end. Her courage and energy have been a great comfort to me. This is the opposite of what should have been for she was the consoler.

'As for Titite [the younger sister], on Sunday we were out walking with some friends. She was careless enough to tear her hands rather badly on a barbed wire fence. Both of them were streaming with blood. She ran back to us laughing—not a tear not a cry. The wounds were serious enough to need a dressing which was kept on for a whole week.

These examples especially the latter where the subject was a little girl of only seven show that the practice of autosuggestion far from reducing energy, is capable of raising it to an unprecedented extent. Let me add that in the cases just recorded no special suggestion of energy had been formulated. The energy made its appearance as a natural outcome—not preconceived not experimentally manufactured—of the actual *practice* of autosuggestion.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to the war and to the risks of crossing the Channel. The letter dates from the end of 1915.

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**PART THREE**  
**INDUCED SUGGESTION**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### AUTONOMY OF THE SUBJECT

BERNHEIM has said "There is no hypnotism there is only suggestion" Coué would require very little persuasion to induce him to say "There is no suggestion there is only autosuggestion" The significance of this would be that even when the personality of a suggester may appear to substitute itself for the personahty of the subject, the latter is still in reality the chief factor The suggestion remains intra individual

The cases to which allusion is made in the above paragraph are as the reader will doubtless have realised for himself those of *profound hypnosis* or *induced sleep*

Even in this condition the dependence of the subject on the hypnotiser is more apparent than real Auguste Forel insists again and again on the large share in the phenomena which must be ascribed to the personality of the subject\* For in the first place the fact that of all sick persons the insane are those in whom suggestion is least successful suffices in Forel's opinion, to prove that the core of the phenomenon remains in the mind of the hypnotised subject Moreover he shows how the subject completes the suggestions made to him, completes them with the aid of elements borrowed from his own personality From this outlook Forel considers that suggested hallucinations furnish a decisive example In fact, if to a subject in the somnambulist state we propose a negative hallucination (that is to say if we suggest to him that he is unable to see a real object) there ensues a hiatus in his visual field and he invariably fills in this

\* Op. cit.  
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hiatus in some way with the aid of a positive autosuggested hallucination. In like manner we cannot induce a positive hallucination without this involving for the subject the production of a negative autosuggested hallucination indispensable to the occurrence of the positive hallucination. Forel explains this as follows: 'We cannot see a gap in the visual field without filling it in with something, be it only with a black background. Conversely we cannot be affected with a positive hallucination unless a portion of the visual field is covered with the hallucinatory object. If the appropriate portion of the real background be not absolutely blocked out by the hallucinatory object, it is at least rendered hazy as happens in the case of transparent hallucinations. The same thing occurs in the case of many hallucinations of hearing and of tactile sensation. One who when lying in bed has the hallucination that he is lying on a pincushion can no longer feel the soft mattress.'

In this domain of hallucinations (always the one which seems most impressive to the onlookers) simple experiments can be devised to prove that in ultimate analysis we have to do solely with autosuggestions. The following is Coué's favourite experiment for this purpose. He suggests for instance to the subject an apparition clothed in white seen on the right-hand window pane. As he makes this suggestion he thinks of the upper pane on the right side. The subject will see the apparition on one of the right hand panes but it will in most cases be on the lower pane, the one through which we usually look out. If the suggester, though he has said 'right-hand pane' has wrapped this up in a number of details so that the right handedness may readily be overlooked, it is quite likely that the subject will see the apparition upon a left hand pane. As for the aspect of the apparition each subject will describe this according to his own fancy. The experiment may be varied in countless ways. It proves beyond dispute that what is realised is not the thought of the hypnotiser. The subject has heard the latter's words and has interpreted them as would a person in the waking

state A mental image has been called up by these words, and it is this image which transforms itself into a suggestion He sees what he has thought not what the hypnotiser has willed There is no question of the conduction as by invisible wires of the operator's thought into the subject's brain<sup>1</sup> If we may say so the subject's own thought is conducted by the subject's own nervous system

As a general rule it is agreed that induced sleep increases suggestibility this signifying that in the hypnotised state the subject obeys the operator's orders better than he would obey them in the waking state that suggestions proposed by the operator whatever these suggestions may be have more chance of being realised than if they were proposed to the subject in the waking state But nothing is more liable to variation Every practitioner has come across subjects who are less obedient in induced sleep than they are in the waking state Those even who are most docile in the hypnotic state none the less quite unexpectedly impose a plea of exception to certain suggestions These facts ostensibly contradictory are perfectly explicable on a theory of autosuggestion Indeed on such a theory it is the contrary which would surprise us The operator's suggestion can be realised solely on condition that it is accepted by the subject's mind and transformed into an autosuggestion

Now what does this *acceptation* involve? The question is far from simple We may say that the acceptance is not a conscious and deliberate act of will It would be better to compare the subject's mind to a soil which may be sometimes suitable and sometimes unsuitable for the implanting of the seed of suggestion sown by the operator In most instances the soil has been prepared by an earlier spontaneous autosuggestion If the subject allows himself to be hypnotised with the preconceived idea that, though he will go to sleep the operator will be able to do nothing with him the probable result will be (since by a law with which we are perfectly familiar, this idea domi

<sup>1</sup> The question of telepathy involves very different considerations This problem is not raised by the ordinary manifestations of hypnotism

nates his mind throughout the induced sleep) that the suggestions proposed to him will fail to take effect. Especially will this failure ensue when the subject is extremely suggestible for then the idea which was in his mind when he was hypnotised will infallibly dominate him. On the other hand it has been noted that those who were absolute sceptics before they were hypnotised those who did not even believe in the reality of the hypnotic sleep may be exceptionally docile in the hands of the hypnotiser. We might even contend that when it has proved possible to hypnotise a sceptic this sceptic will then be an excellent subject. The very fact of feeling sleep take possession of him has abruptly refuted his scepticism. He has been alarmed at finding his freewill escaping him—above all if there has been a wager and if his vanity is also at stake. It would seem that from the first onset of the symptoms of hypnosis (indistinctness of vision sense of weight in the eyelids) such persons are seized with alarm. This emotion hastens the onset of sleep and all the more when the subject makes adverse voluntary efforts for these efforts are promptly reversed. Those who fancy beforehand without always acknowledging it to themselves that they will become mere puppets of which the hypnotiser will pull the strings those who tremble at the thought of what they will become are very likely to become what they dread. Such it would seem are the only cases in which this puppetdom actually arises. It is not a phenomenon of hypnotism but of autosuggestion. It is not a characteristic of profound hypnosis.

When a subject who is customarily docile opposes a plea of exception to some particular suggestion we must not attempt to explain this refusal as a deliberate exercise of will. The question is always one of the soil on which the seed has fallen. We shall find on close examination that the suggestion has involved some infraction of the subject's deeply-rooted tendencies that it conflicts with his character with his inveterate habits. If, for instance we propose some bad action to a good man, conveying it

in the form of a posthypnotic suggestion at the appointed time the idea of performing this action will come into his mind but he will probably have no difficulty in rejecting the prompting just as he habitually represses other bad ideas that arise in his mind from time to time

Speaking generally indifferent suggestions and those which the subject knows to be useful to him are accepted repugnant suggestions are spontaneously rejected This seems to be the rule

We must add that a very important element in this connection is the affective relationship between the subject and the operator The subject will more readily accept suggestions from a person whom he loves or from one in whom he has perfect confidence Fear like fondness may lead to results but these results commonly lack uniformity and are apt to be unstable

In any case it is undesirable that the subject should become a puppet in the hands of the operator, or should imagine that he must become a puppet Those who witness certain hypnotic séances (real or simulated) cannot fail to be struck with the precision with which many of the suggestions are carried out and the idea of the subject's absolute dependence then germinates in the mind Or a person may have listened to an account of the marvels of hypnotism may have read newspaper articles or trivial stories in which the hypnotist has been represented as all powerful If such a person subsequently allows himself to be hypnotised he may exhibit a state of absolute dependence but the dependence is an auto-suggestion, the outcome of a superstition about hypnotism

The question is often mooted, Can persons be constrained by hypnotism to the performance of a bad action? From what has been said above, it will be obvious that in the writer's opinion the correct answer is,

Yes if the subject imagines this to be possible It is, therefore, of considerable importance that the superstition should be destroyed. Books that point out the dangers of hypnotism are far more dangerous than hypnotism itself

For us heterosuggestion even during induced sleep is still an autosuggestion. But we must not be interpreted as implying that this autosuggestion is an act of will on the subject's part. By now the reader will know enough about autosuggestion to realise that the imagination from which it arises is as far as possible removed from the will.

If autosuggestion be the only force at work even in induced suggestion there follows a practical consequence of the utmost importance. Induced suggestion must not be performed by the operator for its own sake. He must regard it as *the education of the subject's power of autosuggestion*. For though the practitioner may secure brilliant or strange results by heterosuggestion we find whenever we probe the matter to the bottom that he has done nothing more than liberate the subject's autosuggestions. If, however the practitioner does not give the subject the key to autosuggestion the latter will believe that the former's influence is the cause of everything and the results will be apt to prove extremely fugitive. When left to himself the subject will find that these results tend gradually to disappear. This happens all the more when, during the induced sleep strange phenomena have occurred. In reality the phenomena of heterosuggestion are less remarkable than many spontaneous autosuggestions but the subject ignores these latter. On the other hand the hypnotic phenomena which he has seen produced in others and which he knows to have been produced in himself reveal the laws of suggestion by isolating them in a way which cannot fail to strike the imagination. In like manner, electricity is now everywhere at work, and is taken as a matter of course but the first time a child is shown electrical experiments in the physical laboratory he feels that he is witnessing marvels. Our subject then believes that the hypnotiser is endowed with wonderful powers. To these powers he attributes the result and imagines that in the absence of the cause (the hypnotiser) there can be no effect. This partly explains why profound hypnosis in which suggestibility

is apparently increased has less marked and less lasting results than spontaneous suggestion

There are additional reasons for dispensing as far as possible with the use of induced sleep as a general method of treatment. When we attempt to hypnotise a new patient we rarely find that profound hypnosis the genuine induced sleep with amnesia after waking can be brought about on the first occasion. In many subjects it is never perfectly attained during the whole course of treatment. As a rule we shall bring about slight or medium hypnosis (somnolence hypotaxia) and when this has passed off the subject will remember everything that has been said and done. More or less consciously he will then be apt to reason as follows: 'The doctor was not able to put me to sleep but he wanted to send me to sleep in order that he might cure me therefore he will not be able to cure me. This autosuggestion becomes firmly fixed in the patient's mind and partly or wholly neutralises the good effects of the treatment. Perhaps the practitioner will take the precaution of telling the patient that profound sleep is not necessary. But if none the less the practitioner makes use of methods which aim at inducing as profound a sleep as possible if he sends all his patients to sleep in so far as he is able to do so the subject will be likely to say to himself that somnolence is a mere makeshift that profound hypnosis is what really counts and that in its absence the results will be unsatisfactory.

On the other hand when profound hypnosis ensues the subject has no remembrance of the condition and when we tell him to make autosuggestions through inducing an analogous condition for himself the advice is a dead letter. Profound hypnosis therefore is not our ideal when our aim is to educate autosuggestion.

\* I have seen a number of Bernheim's old patients. Most of them said: 'I never went to sleep at all or I was still wide awake in the hypnotic sleep or I slept without sleeping or I am not sure if I was really asleep or To please him I told him I had been asleep. —As regards the last phrase we know that this is generally an illusion on the part of the subject but the very existence of the illusion shows that the sleep though real, was not very profound.



These considerations, the fruit of clinical experience and confirmed by time have led Coué to abandon profound hypnosis as part of a general curative system. His method is now wholly based upon slight hypnosis, so slight that it can hardly be distinguished from the waking state. In the great majority of instances the method gives better results than one wholly based upon profound hypnosis. If in exceptional cases the induction of profound hypnosis seems indicated it should not be exclusively employed but should be alternated with slight hypnosis for in the latter condition we can educate autosuggestion by making suggestions to the subject in the waking state.

This evolution of the method which has culminated in the abandonment of profound hypnosis for all but exceptional cases must not be identified with a parallel development realised by Dubois and Déjerine. According to these authors, hypnotism must be abandoned. Suggestion is to be replaced by persuasion. The reader might suppose the distinction to be purely verbal but there is more at stake. Dubois<sup>1</sup> and Déjerine<sup>2</sup> claim to address persuasion to the subject's *will* and *intelligence* to his superficial consciousness. Suggestion, in their view is dangerous because it addresses itself to the subconscious because it tends to be an education in automatism. What their movement has in common with the New Nancy School is that it proposes to render the subject both master and author of his own betterment to make him more independent of the practitioner. In this aim we are at one with Dubois and Déjerine. But the means they would employ for its attainment shows that their psychology is at fault. We are controlled by the subconscious. The fact is proved by the phenomena of spontaneous suggestion. It is impossible for us in our turn to exercise any control over the activities of the subconscious unless we enter into relations with it.

<sup>1</sup> Dubois *Les psychonévroses et leur traitement* Masson, Paris, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Déjerine *Les manifestations fonctionnelles des psychonévroses. Leur traitement par la psychothérapie* Masson Paris 1911.

Coues autosuggestion is a means for opening up relations of this kind. Dubois and Déjerine's persuasion is not. In earlier pages I referred to the well known powerlessness of reason and will in the struggle against passion.

Persuasion can make its way no further than into the superficial strata of the mind. It does not bore deep enough to tap the subsoil waters and yet its advocates claim that it can provide us with refreshing draughts. Unquestionably Dubois and Déjerine have secured excellent results in actual practice, but their successes doubtless depend upon their personality, their sincerity, their devotion which have awakened confidence in their patients and have initiated beneficial autosuggestions in the minds of these. Here the *intelligence* plays no more than a secondary part. As for the *will* the appeal to this faculty as we have shown is a disastrous error. Finally the method of persuasion even in the view of its founders has a very limited field of application when compared with the method of autosuggestion as perfected by the New Nancy School.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PRELIMINARY EXERCISES

THE first step in the subject's autosuggestive education is to show him by simple experiments how readily an idea can realise itself provided that it exclusively occupies the mind. The subject will first see these experiments performed by others. In the next stage he will do them himself and thus from being mere *experiments* they will become *exercises*.

The series of elementary exercises which I now consider most valuable, so that I have come to make a methodical use of them whereas at first I regarded them as no more than supplementary illustrations are carried out with the aid of *Chevreul's pendulum*.

The experiments with Chevreul's pendulum occupy in the theory of autosuggestion the place occupied in electrical theory by the electrical pendulum—the ball of pith suspended by a silk thread. It is merely requisite to explain to the pupil that the more complex and more important phenomena of autosuggestion are no more than applications of the principle deducible from the working of Chevreul's pendulum\*. This will enable him to grasp the whole bearing of the principle in question.

Chevreur! it will be remembered had had his interest awakened by the 'exploratory pendulum' used in his day by clairvoyants and in drawing-room séances. This pendulum, held in the medium's hand, consisted of a

M. E. Chevreul *op cit.*—In 1830 this distinguished chemist became director of the Natural History Museum in Paris. Born 1786 died 1889. Perhaps the only man of worldwide fame whose centenary has been celebrated during his lifetime.—TRANSLATORS NOTE

ring suspended by a hair. The ring hung down into a tumbler or wineglass and answered questions put to the medium by tapping against the side of the glass once or oftener as the case demanded. Chevreul satisfied himself that the person holding the pendulum was unaware of imparting any movement to it and he asked himself whether the idea or simple image of a movement would not suffice to bring about this movement. A theory was current that the oscillations of the pendulum were ampler when the ring was suspended over mercury. Chevreul had little difficulty in proving that the mercury had no influence whatever. He demonstrated that the subject's thought (not his will) was the sole cause of the oscillations. This thought acted through the intermediation of imperceptible movements which were involuntary and unconscious (subconscious).

Starting from Chevreul's classical experiments, I have devised the following exercises, and every one of my new pupils has to perform them.

*Materials.* In the middle of a sheet of white paper draw a circle *O*. Draw a line *AB* passing through the centre of *O*. Draw another line *CD* perpendicular to *AB* likewise passing through the centre of *O*. These must stand out very distinctly on the white surface. Place the sheet on the ground or on the table in front of the subject so that the line *AB* runs from left to right across his field of vision while the line *CD* runs from near to far. Give the subject the pendulum which resembles a miniature fishing rod and line the pendant being a *small heavy* and preferably *shining* body. The rod and the line should each be about eight inches in length. An ordinary pencil will serve for the rod. The bob of the pendulum should weigh about as much as a new shilling piece. The pupil takes the rod in his hand and is asked to hold himself upright but not to press the elbow nervously against the side. It would be a mistake for him to assume a position which would hinder his freedom of movement. The bob of the pendulum will be set in motion, not by any mysterious currents but by the pupil's own movements, real

though imperceptible. These movements must take place *quite independently* of his will. He must be unaware of them or rather must become aware of them only after they have taken place so that he regards them objectively as spectator and not as actor.

*First Exercise* The pupil is requested to hold the pendulum in such a way that the bright bob occludes the centre of the circle. The pendant will not be vertically above the centre but somewhere on the straight line between the centre and the pupil's eye. To get the correct position the pupil may close one eye. He is now asked to let his mind dwell on the line AB following it mentally from one end to the other. He is not to make any attempt to swing the pendulum but is on the contrary to aim at keeping it motionless. We add that there is no difficulty in thinking well about the line. It must be done without effort. Enough we say to look at the line without losing sight of the bob. In these conditions we inform him the pendulum will begin to swing in the direction AB so that the bob will pass to and fro along this line. It may be well at the same time to sketch out somewhere in the pupil's visual field with the finger with a ruler or with another pendulum on a line parallel with AB a to and fro movement which will help to call up in his mind the idea of the expected movement of the pendulum he holds (This is an accessory often useful in the early stages but needless when the experiment has become familiar). In these circumstances after a few seconds or after a few minutes at the outside the pendulum begins to swing. The amplitude of the oscillations rapidly increases so much so that some persons feel that the devil must be at work and drop the bewitched pendulum as if it burned their fingers. But of course this alarm is rare. The very reason why I select the experiment for the initiation into autosuggestion is that it does not seem overwhelmingly marvellous and is none the less surprising enough to arouse in the pupil an emotional state extremely favourable to suggestion. Children in especial, do not take fright. They are astonished at first then amused, and they seldom

fail to make a pendulum of their own so that they can renew the exercise for themselves. This, indeed is an additional advantage of the experiment. Everyone can easily reproduce it at his own time and pleasure, thus convincing himself that the master's will has nothing to do with the causation of the phenomena and that they are really the outcome of autosuggestion.

There is yet another good point about this exercise. The shining bob and its regular oscillations tend imperceptibly to induce a slight degree of hypnosis and this favours suggestion. Spontaneously therefore the pupil has learned what is the condition into which he must pass if he is to make effective suggestions to himself.

Finally when the experiment above described has been perfectly successful we can easily convince the pupil by drawing his attention to the matter that the more he tries to keep the bob at rest the more ample are its oscillations. This will reveal to him the law of reversed effort.

*Second Exercise* The foregoing exercise may now be varied so as to show the pupil how accurately thought transforms itself into visible reality.

While the pendulum is swinging vigorously to and fro along the line AB we ask the pupil to transfer his thought to the line CD telling him that the pendulum will spontaneously vary the direction of its swing. If this result be slow in coming it will be because the subject is hampered by the visual obsession of the movement AB. In that case it will be necessary to put the pendulum at rest. But in most instances this will be superfluous and the change in the direction of movement will take place without any difficulty.

How does the change occur? Sometimes the oscillations AB grow less and less extensive the pendulum becomes motionless and a moment later the swing in the new direction begins. In other instances the oscillation AB becomes rounded into an ellipse with its foci lying over the line CD, gradually this ellipse grows longer and narrower and is ere long reduced to a line coincident with CD. In yet other cases the bob continues to swing in a

single plane but the line representing that plane rotates gradually on the centre of the circle O until the line of swing has moved from AB to CD

If however, we ask the pupil how it is that a change has ensued in the direction of the oscillation he is usually unable to answer His awareness of what has been going on in his mind has been minimal This fact enables us to reveal to an intelligent pupil the law of subconscious teleology He has thought the end and nothing but the end and his subconscious has devoted its ingenuity to the finding of means (any means will serve) for the attainment of that end We add All healing all improvement depends upon the production of movements in one part of the body or another but it is needless for you to know what these movements are in order that you may bring them about You need merely think of the end the cure You have just learned that your subconscious is a clever physicist He is just as good a physiologist and he will find the mean for the fulfilment of the end of which you think he will find them without your knowing anything about the matter

*Third Exercise* Ask the subject to think of the circle and the movement will become circular The change may take place by way of motionlessness or by way of an elliptical swing In a sense this exercise is intermediate between the two foregoing and we may therefore transpose No 2 and No 3 But in passing directly from AB to CD we get a more obvious demonstration of the law of subconscious teleology for here there is more variety in the choice of means

Whereas in the linear oscillations there are two points of rest alternating with the motion of the swing the circular movement is continuous It may therefore acquire such speed and amplitude that the thread rises nearly to a horizontal plane When the experiment has reached this stage the pupil is quite able to isolate himself in a thought In that case instead of drawing his attention post factum to the law of reversed effort, we may demonstrate this law by a special exercise, as follows

*Fourth Exercise* Without stopping the movement of the pendulum we ask the subject to think I cannot stop it At the same time he is to make efforts to stop it It will then become apparent that such efforts serve only to increase the activity of the movement which may become so rapid that the bob ceases to be visible But directly the pupil discontinues these efforts and lets his thoughts dwell on immobility the movement grows slower and its amplitude diminishes

*Fifth Exercise* The pupil still holds the pendulum by the handle In front of him we place an upright placard on which are drawn several letters of the alphabet ranged along a single horizontal line The shining bob must be at the level of the letters and at such a distance that it can strike them in its swing We begin by asking the subject to think of the fore and aft direction As soon as movement in this direction has been established we tell him to think of a letter Without the handle having been displaced in any way the pendulum changes its plane of oscillation in order to touch the letter thought of When facility in this exercise has been gained the placard may have the entire alphabet written on it still in a single line and therefore rather small The pupil must now mentally spell a word and thereupon each letter as he thinks of it is successively touched by the bob

One of the most interesting features in this series of experiments is the precision displayed by the subconscious It often in this respect shows greater skill than is seen in the subject's voluntary movements We take the opportunity of explaining to the pupil that what he has just witnessed and realised is not an exceptional experience, but the manifestation of a general law We give him typical and concrete instances of spontaneous suggestion emphasising at the same time the law of reversed effort These explanations must be adapted to his intellectual attainments

In suitable circumstances the experiments with Chevreul's pendulum may be supplemented by a demonstra



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tion of the well known phenomena of *cumberlandism*. The pupil is asked to hide some object. He then holds your hand—you of course not knowing the hiding place. He is to concentrate his mind on the thought of this hiding place. Thereupon thinking of a direction he unconsciously impresses on his whole frame and upon his hand in particular movements in that direction. You have merely to allow yourself to be guided by these movements in order in due course to be able to put your fingers on the hidden object.\*

Obviously the experiment must be explained to the pupil if it is to bear fruit in his mind. He must not be allowed to suppose after the manner of those who witness such feats at fairs or in drawing rooms that the discovery of the hidden objects is effected by thought transference. What we have to show him is that as soon as we think sufficiently hard of a movement our whole body begins to make this movement.

This may serve as an introduction to some account of the way in which our sayings and doings continually reveal what is going on in our subconscious and to a demonstration that our mental attitude is in the end supreme over events and over what are termed chance happenings.

A good exercise less new in principle than those with Chevreul's pendulum but well fitted to succeed them is that of *falling backwards and forwards*.

You ask the pupil to stand upright, the body as stiff as a poker the feet in close apposition (toes as well as heels) but the ankles being kept flexible like a well oiled hinge. Tell him that he is in fact to stand like a plank jointed to the floor by hinges but balanced in an upright position. Point out to him that if such a plank be pulled very gently either forwards or backwards after it has moved a fraction of an inch it will fall as a rigid mass unresistingly forwards if it has been pulled forwards and backwards if it has been

\* This experiment is certain to be successful with persons who have had good results with Chevreul's pendulum and have thus shown themselves extremely sensitive to the ideoreflex force.

pulled backwards Tell him you are now going to draw him back by the shoulders and that he is to allow himself to fall backwards into your arms unresistingly turning on his ankles as if they were hinges while his feet remain motionless as if nailed to the ground

As soon as he has carried out these orders successfully you go on to inform him that in the state of unstable equilibrium in which he is now placed the material impulsion which you communicated to him when you drew his body backwards may perfectly well be replaced by the impulsion of a *thought* The pupil will merely have to think I am falling backwards I am falling backwards without meditating in the least as to the consequences of the fall and he will actually feel himself falling into your arms<sup>1</sup>

To bring this experiment to a successful issue the experimenter will find it well as a rule to sketch out a movement which will help to impress on the pupil's mind the idea I am falling backwards just as in the practice with Chevreul's pendulum it was well for the instructor to move his finger in the direction indicated by his words The procedure then is as follows Having requested the pupil to hold his head erect and to close his eyes you will apply your right fist to the back of his neck and your left hand to his forehead Saying to him several times,

You are falling backwards or, Think I am falling backwards you gently draw the left hand backwards over the pupil's temple without exercising the slightest pressure and at the same time you slowly but continuously withdraw the right fist

These manipulations are superfluous in the case of persons who are exceptionally sensitive or who have already had considerable practice in the exercise

The experiment is likewise practised in the inverse way

This is advised by Coué as a preliminary experiment. But of late he has dispensed with it and has contented himself with the experiments to be subsequently described. He finds that the subject is in most cases sufficiently prepared by the emotional atmosphere of the collective sittings—and by the preliminary suggestion exercised by the practitioner's reputation

The pupil, still in the same attitude of unstable equilibrium is asked to think "I am falling forwards" and he actually does begin to fall forwards. This time since you are facing the pupil you can tell him to keep his eyes fixed on yours while you reciprocate. In this manner you will induce a moderate degree of hypnosis which will be an aid to suggestion.

Another experiment more striking which will succeed at the first trial with everyone who has proved very sensitive in the foregoing experiments is that of the *chair*.

The pupil stands upright behind a chair. He places his hands horizontally on the upper edge of the back with his thumbs strongly applied to the posterior surface of the back. He then concentrates his thoughts on the idea "The chair is rearing up on its hind legs the chair is pushing me the chair is rising." At the same time he stares hard at the back, between his thumbs, and presses with the thumbs strongly as if to resist the attempted movement of the chair. But the stronger his resistance the more rapidly does the chair rear on its hind legs, sometimes with such force that I have seen the subject actually *thrown backwards to the ground*. (It is a wise precaution therefore to stand behind him.)

What has happened? Dwelling on the idea that the chair is going to rear the subject has unconsciously with the palms of his hands as fulcrums and in opposition to his conscious efforts with the thumbs, performed all the muscular movements requisite to make the chair rise on its hind legs.

This last exercise will only succeed as a rule in persons who have had a certain amount of training. Moreover, there are some subjects who find a difficulty in grasping the state of mind it implies. But the earlier exercises those with Chevreul's pendulum and the falling backwards and forwards are easily performed by everyone.

The pupil should be asked to reproduce them unaided, not merely for practice but also that he may convince himself that the active force is really that of autosuggestion.

The exercise with the pendulum is a good one to repeat before making suggestions to oneself. It may be classed among exercises in concentration. Moreover, it is excellent for persons who have never witnessed a sitting and who wish unaided to train themselves in reflective suggestion.

## CHAPTER THREE

### COUÉ'S PRACTICE

FROM the exercises above described or from some of them the pupil may pass to experiments in contracture and inhibition such as are more familiar to the practitioners of classical hypnotism. At the present time Coué begins and ends with these. In the conditions under which he operates they seem to him sufficient. We shall now therefore describe the working of Coué's clinic.

It will be well to use his own words in most instances. He describes in the following terms the principle of the experiments in contracture and inhibition.

'Request the subject to clasp his hands and to do so as firmly as possible until slight tremor ensues. Look fixedly into the subject's eyes as in the last experiment.' Place your hands on his with a gentle pressure as if you were going to press more strongly. Tell him to think he is unable to unclasp the fingers that you are going to count up to three and that when you say three he must endeavour to separate his hands thinking all the while, 'I cannot, I cannot, etc.', and that he will find it impossible to do so. Then count 'one two three' very slowly and immediately add, spacing out the syllables 'You can not you can not etc.' If the subject lets his mind dwell adequately on the thought, 'I cannot, not merely will he be unable to unclasp the hands but they will grasp one another the more firmly the greater the efforts he makes to separate them. In fact he will arrive at a result the exact opposite of that which he wishes to

Falling forwards.

attain After a few seconds say to him Now think, 'I can ' and his fingers will become unclasped

Keep your gaze continually fixed on the root of the subject's nose and do not permit him to turn his eyes away from yours for a moment

If the experimenter finds that the subject can unclasp the hands the experimenter must not think that this is his own fault it is the subject's fault The subject has not thought well I can not Tell him so in confident tones and repeat the experiment

Always use a tone of command the accents of one who will not tolerate disobedience I do not mean that the voice should be raised On the contrary it is better to speak in your ordinary diapason, but you should space out the syllables in a dry and imperative manner

When this experiment has been successful success will readily be obtained in all the others provided the experimenter conforms strictly to the instructions given above

"Some subjects are extremely sensitive and those of this type can be readily recognised from the ease with which contracture of their fingers and of their limbs can be induced After two or three thoroughly successful experiments it is no longer necessary to say to them 'Think this think that It suffices to say in the commanding tone employed by every good suggester Clench your fist now you can't unclench it or Close your eyes now you can't open them Thereupon, try as he may, the subject will be unable to unclench his fist will be unable to open his eyes A few seconds later say, 'You can and the contracture instantly passes off

These experiments can be varied as much as you please Here are some of the variations the subject places his hands in apposition and you suggest to him that they have stuck together he lays his hand on the table and is told that it has adhered to the surface you tell him that he is glued to his chair and cannot rise you make him stand up and then tell him he is unable to walk you show him a penholder lying on the table tell him it

weighs two hundredweight and that it is therefore too heavy for him to lift and so on

"I cannot insist too often upon the fact that in all these experiments the phenomena are not due to *suggestion* properly so called. They are the outcome of the *autosuggestion* which in the subject's mind ensues upon the practitioner's suggestion."

Such experiments as we have said are familiar to every one who practises hypnotism. But it is necessary to insist upon the original features they exhibit as performed in Coué's practice

1 In the first place they are put before the pupil as exercises in autosuggestion and not as experiments in suggestion. The practitioner begins more or less as follows: "You have come here in search of someone who can cure you. You are on the wrong track. I have never cured anyone. I merely teach people to cure themselves. I have taught many persons to cure themselves and that is what I am going to teach you. The experiments in which you are about to participate will always succeed even if they should seem to fail. For I have never claimed that my thought can realise itself in you. My claim has always been that each person's own thought realises itself in himself. If therefore at the moment when I ask you to think, I cannot unclasp my hands, you think on the contrary 'I can, you will inevitably be able to unclasp them. You may imagine that you have convicted me of error but in reality you will have proved the soundness of the principle of autosuggestion."

Apart from the educative value of this method of procedure it has an immediate practical advantage. If an experiment fails the pupil attributes the failure to his own unskilfulness and not to the practitioner's impotence. Consequently, he does not lose confidence in the latter.

2 These considerations serve partly to explain the second characteristic whereby Coué's practice is differentiated

\* Emile Coué, *De la suggestion et de ses applications* Barbier Nancy 1915 pp. 13 and 14.

I refer to the fact that in his clinic the experiments in contracture are carried out when the subject is in the waking state (or if you will in a condition of very slight hypnosis) and that they nevertheless are almost invariably successful if not at the first attempt at least after a few trials. Moreover as has already been hinted for an explanation of this astounding facility we must take into account certain causes foreign to the actual procedure. These causes will now be enumerated.

The Nancy sittings are collective. On the average about thirty persons are present at each. While a sitting is in progress a great many patients are waiting their turn in the garden or in an adjoining room each with a numbered ticket allotted to him on arrival. Everyone knows the reputation of the clinic. To the simple minded it is a place where Coué works miracles. For the first time in the history of mankind a genuinely scientific practitioner is the object of a collective faith analogous to that inspired in earlier days by certain mystics and charlatans. *The public on which Coué acts by suggestion is a public on which suggestion has already been at work.* It is not surprising that with such a public he has no need to employ preliminary exercises.

Furthermore the sitting itself is methodically utilised to superadd the force of example to the force of this preliminary suggestion based on reputation. The newcomers sit among persons who have already attended numerous sittings and who make no secret of their progress towards health. From sitting to sitting each patient can see how the others improve can see how paralytics walk how the deaf hear. Besides the exercises are repeated by the old patients under the eyes of the new and not until then do the new patients make trial for themselves. In these conditions in such an atmosphere it is natural that experiments in the production of contracture should almost invariably succeed after Coué has looked the patient in the eyes for a few seconds. We can understand why he has found it possible to discontinue the preliminary exercises of falling backwards or forwards.



In my own view exercises in contracture should not be invariably prescribed as preliminary exercises. It is from necessity rather than on account of their intrinsic value that Coué has chosen them for this purpose. They can be realised more speedily than others and speed is of the first importance to one who has to convey suggestions to a hundred persons or more daily.

Nevertheless as preliminary exercises these exercises in contracture are not free from drawbacks. Although they are rendered more acceptable to the pupil by the idea that their essential cause is autosuggestion none the less there remains in his mind the feeling that a suggestion of impotence has been conveyed that in greater or less degree there has been an attempt to limit his freewill. To many persons this is distasteful. Even when the experiment succeeds their vanity sets repression to work and they persuade themselves that there was little success or none. To a large extent this conviction is illusory like the familiar belief on the part of the subject who has been completely hypnotised that he did not really go to sleep. But the illusion suffices to neutralise the good effects of the experiment. Were it not that the pupil's confidence is reanimated by the contagion of example by the sight of the cures worked upon others it is probable that the results would be unsatisfactory.

That is why I consider it preferable as a matter of principle to begin with *exercises which give the subject the feeling that he is increasing his own powers* rather than with those which suggest impotence. Then there will be no unavowed thoughts. Particularly valuable in this respect are the exercises with Chevreul's pendulum where the subject is amazed and delighted to find that by his thought he gives movement, and so to say life to an inert object.\*

On the other hand we are so much accustomed to

\* Children who perform this experiment have the feeling that the bob of the pendulum is alive. That is why they find the experiment so fascinating. A little Russian boy said to me 'I speak to my bob I say to it Go to the right turn in a circle stop And I speak to it in Russian, for it understands Russian better than French.'

do whatever we like with our hands that experiments tending to produce contracture of the hands are apt at first to seem incredible For this reason they may fail Even if they succeed we are very ready to think we have deceived ourselves But when some apparatus with which we are entirely unfamiliar such as Chevreul's pendulum is put into our hands we are unprejudiced and are quite willing to expect novelties from its use

I must not be understood to imply that Coué's methods as above described ought to be abandoned Their very inconveniences have as obverse advantages which are no less real Their incredibility once the pupil has recognised that these marvels actually happen serves but to heighten conviction and to impress the imagination As for the suggestion of powerlessness it is an excellent means for throwing into relief the law of reversed effort This is why Coué for whom this law is the chief guiding principle prefers the methods he has chosen

Whatever may be the rights of the matter I opine that in ordinary practice it will be better to begin with other exercises These will very likely suffice Experiments in contracture may be reserved for especially sensitive subjects in whom they are certain to succeed For the rest we should assure our pupils that *all the exercises have the same educative value* and that it matters little which particular group is chosen for practice

Having made these reservations I will return to the exposition of Coué's methods, and will once more allow him to speak for himself

When the subject has passed through the foregoing experiments he is ripe for curative suggestions His mind is tilled soil in which the seed can germinate and grow to maturity Before it was uncultivated ground, where the seed would have perished from drought

'Whatever the patient's trouble may be whether bodily or mental the same procedure is applicable and the same formulas are employed with trifling individual variations

You say to the subject 'Sit down and close your eyes I shall not attempt to put you to sleep for it is needless I ask you to close your eyes for the simple reason that I do not wish your attention to be distracted by the objects within your field of vision Now say to yourself earnestly that all the words I am going to utter will fix themselves in your mind will be graven there that they must always remain fixed and graven there permanently impressed so that without any exercise of will without your knowing anything about the matter quite unconsciously on your part your organism and your self will have to obey them I tell you first of all that every day three times a day morning noon and evening at meal times you will be hungry that is to say you will experience that pleasant sensation which makes us think and say 'Oh how I should like something to eat! You will in fact eat with great satisfaction but you will never overeat yourself You will eat enough neither too much nor too little and you will know that you have eaten enough when something says within you You have eaten enough Then you will stop for you must eat no more In these conditions having eaten with appetite and having eaten no more than you should you will digest well that is to say you will have no discomfort whatever, either in the stomach or in the bowel no uneasiness or pain of any kind Assimilation will be perfectly performed, and your organism will make the best possible use of the food to form blood muscle strength energy—in a word to create life

Since you have digested well the excretory functions will be well performed Every morning, on rising, you will feel a desire to go to stool Without the use of laxative medicines, and without recourse to any other artificial means, you will have normal and satisfactory evacuations

'Every night as soon as you wish, you will go to sleep and you will go on sleeping until the time at which you wish to wake next morning You will sleep calmly, soundly, quietly You will have no nightmare

When you wake up you will always feel well cheerful thoroughly fit

If you have sometimes been melancholy gloomy, out of sorts filled with forebodings henceforward you will be free from such troubles Instead of being moody bored unhappy anxious you will be cheerful thoroughly cheerful happy with no good reason for it perhaps but then in the past you may often have been unhappy with no good reason for it Nay more even if you have serious cause for unhappiness, for melancholy you will have no such feelings

If at times you have been impatient or angry, you will no longer be anything of the kind On the contrary you will always be patient and henceforward the happenings which used to irritate you will leave you perfectly unmoved

If you have occasionally been haunted by evil and unwholesome ideas by fears or by phobias I assure you that these ideas these fears these phobias will gradually cease to trouble your imagination they will seem to melt away, to pass into a distant cloud where everything vanishes

I add that all your organs work perfectly Your heart beats normally and the circulation goes on as it should The lungs act well The stomach the intestine, the liver the gall bladder the kidneys the urinary bladder—all do their duty If any one of the organs named is actually out of order the disturbance will lessen day by day so that within a brief period it will have entirely disappeared and the normal function will have been restored

If in any organ some structural lesion should exist this physical disorder will rapidly be relieved and a complete cure will speedily ensue (I should mention that we can cure an affected organ without knowing that it is actually out of order Under the influence of the auto-suggestion 'the affected organ will be restored to health the unconscious, which knows what organ is involved will do all that is required')

To these general suggestions which may seem perhaps a trifle tedious and which to some may even appear childish, but which are *indispensable* must be added those which apply to the special case of the individual subject you are treating

All these suggestions must be made in monotonous and soothing accents with due stress on the more essential words. Your tone should invite the subject if not actually to fall asleep at least to grow somewhat torpid so that his mind becomes a blank

When the list of suggestions is finished you address the subject as follows. To sum up I mean that in all respects alike physically and mentally you will hence forward enjoy excellent health better health than you have hitherto enjoyed. Now I am going to count up to three. At the word three you will pass out of the condition in which you now are will pass out of it quite quietly. When you do so you will wake up thoroughly you will not feel drowsy or tired on the contrary you will feel strong alert fit full of life and vigour further more you will feel bright and cheerful will feel well in every respect. One two three

At the word three the subject opens his eyes, smiles and has an expression of contentment and wellbeing

Sometimes though this rarely happens he is cured on the spot. More often he is better his pain or his distress of mind has wholly or partly disappeared but only for a season

In any case the suggestions must be renewed from time to time. The requisite frequency varies in different subjects. Always as improvement is more marked the intervals between the sittings can be extended until the time arrives when the treatment can be completely discontinued—this of course being when cure has taken place

Before dismissing the patient tell him that he carries within him the means of cure that you yourself are merely an instructor, who can teach him how to use this means and that he must aid you in your task

Every morning therefore before rising and every evening as soon as he has gone to bed he is to close his eyes and to imagine himself in your presence. Then he must repeat fifteen or twenty times the phrase *Day by day in all respects I get better and better*. As he does this he must mentally underline '*in all respects*' since this includes every kind of trouble mental as well as bodily. Such general suggestion is more potent than particular suggestions.

From what has been said it is easy to grasp the role of the suggester. He is not a master who issues orders; he is a friend; he is a guide who conducts the patient step by step along the road to health.

Since all the suggestions are made in the patient's interest his unconscious asks no better than permission to assimilate them and to transform them into auto-suggestions. When this has been done cure follows more or less rapidly.

At collective sittings the general suggestions which are the same for all the patients are formulated once only. When the time has come for individual suggestions the practitioner goes up to each patient in turn touches him and speaks to him of the topics with which he is specially concerned. Veiled terminology can be employed in relation to any matter to which open allusion might be indiscreet. While these individual suggestions are in progress the patients who are not at the moment engaging the practitioner's attention remain motionless, with eyes closed and muscles relaxed. The monotonous tone of the operator is intended to exercise a soothing influence, and does in fact lull the patients. This is the only hypnotising factor and it proves sufficient without arousing alarm in anyone. The hypnosis thereby induced, commonly the slightest degree of hypnosis is just as natural as that brought about by a cradle-song or that due to the rustling of branches in the breeze which lulls you to sleep as you lie beneath a tree. We are at the very antipodes of the barbarous methods of the Salpêtrière school.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCRETE RESULTS

#### (SUGGESTION AND PSYCHOANALYSIS)

LIÉBAULT and Bernheim declared that they succeeded in conveying effective suggestions to at least 90 % of their subjects. Vogt and Forel speak of successes with 97 %. Coué claims to have exceeded the latter percentage by a few tenths. He considers in fact that only two classes of persons are permanently rebellious to the exercises and consequently refractory to the method. In his own words these classes are composed of

1 Persons whose mental development is so backward that they cannot understand what you say to them

2 Persons whose level of intellectual culture is high but who are so fickle minded that they are incapable of *consciously* devoting their attention to a single idea for the space of a few seconds <sup>1</sup>

He adds that these two classes taken together represent barely 3 % of the population <sup>2</sup>

Let me add that, in my own view persons in the second class ought not to be abandoned without a trial. More over as I have shown certain persons are rebellious to contracture experiments for reasons very different from inconstancy of mind. In any case by the use of the pendulum experiments we can unquestionably increase the proportion of persons found amenable. Provisionally I feel entitled to speak of about 98 % of the population as susceptible. Future experience will enable us to obtain more precise statistics

<sup>1</sup> Op cit p. 11

Op cit p. 17

If by the new methods we can secure but little increase in the proportion of *persons* amenable to suggestion (and indeed above 97 % there is not much scope for increase) it might none the less seem that we could hope to secure a considerable increase in the proportion of *cases* amenable to suggestive treatment. Unfortunately a case is a less definite entity than a person and percentages here would be artificial. But this much can be asserted. The method expounded in the present work has secured incontestable results *in cases alleged to be incurable in patients given up by practitioners employing only the conventional methods of treatment*. The statement conflicts with received ideas but we must bow before the facts. There are of course systematists who persist in denying facts in the name of principle—as if a principle were anything more than a formula synthesising a certain number of known facts as if a principle could refuse to grant new facts the right to contradict it. Those who will deny a fact in the name of a principle are like a child which having seen lions only in cages denies a priori that lions can exist free. As Arago said he is a rash man who pronounces the word impossible anywhere outside the sphere of pure mathematics.

Let us dismiss theory for the nonce and let us examine the facts. These facts have been observed under conditions which give guarantees for all desirable accuracy of observation.

In the psychonervous domain the methods of the New Nancy School have given remarkable results in cases where ordinary psychotherapy had failed. Here are two striking instances.

I Y of Nancy neurasthenic for some years past suffers from phobias, from terrors. The gastric and intestinal functions are badly performed. He does not sleep well. He is gloomy and is troubled with thoughts of suicide. He sways like a drunken man when he walks. His mind dwells unceasingly on his symptoms. *Treatment has hitherto proved unavailing and he continually grows*



worse *A month at a special institution did him no good whatever* The patient consulted Coué in the beginning of October 1910 The preliminary experiments were fairly easy The practitioner explained the autosuggestive method the existence of the unconscious etc Suggestion For two or three days Y found these explanations rather difficult to follow Then the light broke in upon him

I understand he said—Suggestion followed by daily autosuggestion Improvement was slow at first but soon became more speedy *A complete cure was effected in six weeks*<sup>1</sup>

2 R de B has suffered from neurasthenia for *more than twenty years* Has consulted celebrated specialists in Nancy (Bernheim) Paris Strasburg Berne (Dubois) etc Has paid long visits to some of these specialists but the results have always been negative Came to consult Coué in July 1915 Improvement followed the very first visit After each consultation a further advance could be noted and at the end of three months the patient declared himself well and indeed very well—the bombardment of the city notwithstanding<sup>2</sup>

The cure of neurasthenia is often unexpectedly rapid Let me give another of Coué's cases which is typical

A lady came to consult him Her sister had suffered from neurasthenia complicated with various functional troubles and had been cured by the Nancy method The new patient likewise suffered from neurasthenia in an extremely aggravated form She spent quite half her time in bed utterly unable to get about or to do any work She had a bad appetite, poor digestion, low spirits—Cure resulted from a single sitting—The case was followed up for two years during which time there was no relapse

It is impossible to find room for cases of all functional and organic diseases The reader must be content with a record of instances where the results have been exceptionally striking or peculiarly novel

<sup>1</sup> Op cit p 24

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished.—Privately reported to Baudouin by Coué.

## I

In the study of spontaneous suggestion special mention was made of the action of the mother's brain upon the foetus of the action of the mind on the mechanisms of pregnancy childbirth etc.—Induced suggestion has been proved to exercise a notable influence upon the female pelvic organs

Coué has repeatedly found that on the average his method will cure severe metritis in six weeks Here are some examples

1 Woman suffering from metritis and salpingitis Considerable relief was noted after the first sitting Complete cure in five weeks confirmed by the patient's regular medical attendant (1915)

2 Woman aged 30 metritis of six years duration Her doctor considered operation indispensable Dreading this the patient wished to try suggestion as a last resort Cure was instantaneous the success being doubtless due in large measure to the emotional state arising from the fear of operation Kept under observation for six months during which there was no relapse (1915)

3 Woman aged 28 metritis and salpingitis of long standing (several years) Same result (1915)

4 Woman aged 60 metritis for the last twenty four years grows steadily worse Operation thought indispensable Complete cure in six weeks from suggestive treatment Confirmed by the surgeon who had been going to operate (1915)<sup>\*</sup>

These examples of recent date have been chosen because of their striking characteristics Earlier instances, which it is needless to record, show that the cures are lasting

The New Nancy School has to its credit several cases in which typical fibromata have completely disappeared under treatment This phenomenon does not differ in essence from the disappearance of a wart As Coué has

<sup>\*</sup> Cases 1 and 4 were published in the Bulletin Ecole de Nancy for the year 1915 Cases 2 and 3 were privately communicated.

well said the process is explicable in the same way as is the arrest of haemorrhage by suggestion. We must assume in both cases that the vasoconstrictor system is at work—The difference lies in the duration of the suggestive action and in the magnitude of the result

## II

We have likewise seen spontaneous suggestion at work in the cure of tuberculosis and we have examined some of the statistics Louis Rénon has published statistics which clearly prove the reality of this action. Since however in the Nancy cases autosuggestion is systematically employed we need not be surprised to find that Coué's results are yet more remarkable than those recorded by Rénon (Supra pp 97 et seq)

Some of his cases tend to revolutionise our views

1 Woman of thirty in the third stage of pulmonary consumption. Increasing emaciation, notwithstanding hyperalimentation. Cough shortness of breath expectoration seems to have only a few months to live. Preliminary experiments indicate great sensitiveness. Suggestion immediate improvement. From the next day a decline in the morbid symptoms begins. Improvement continues from day to day the weight increases rapidly though hyperalimentation has been discontinued. After a few months the cure seems complete—This patient lived at Troyes. In May 1910 Coué finally left Troyes for Nancy. On January 1 1911 Madame D wrote him a letter of thanks informing him that she was pregnant, and was in splendid health—A later report showed that there had been no relapse<sup>1</sup>

2 A lad of fifteen has a swelling of tubercular origin on the right arm. It is 4 inches long 2 inches wide and 1 inch in thickness—Completely cured at Nancy in four months<sup>2</sup>

3 I was able to observe a similar case in Geneva. A little girl aged 11, suffering from tuberculosis was brought

<sup>1</sup> Coué op cit p 23

Privately communicated.

to me at the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute in November 1915. On the temple was a tubercular ulcer the size of a florin. It dated from four months back and had obstinately refused to heal under treatment. The child proved sensitive and confiding. Suggestion Autosuggestion carried out by the patient conscientiously every morning and every evening. Great was my astonishment and equally great was the astonishment of my pupils when the girl returned a week later with the ulcer already cicatrised. The epithelium covering the surface was still diaphanous and pink in colour. A few weeks later the appearance was almost normal. Within a month from the date of the first suggestion the cough had completely disappeared although the time was the middle of winter. Next month a slight bronchitis supervened and was cured without difficulty. Appetite had become normal. sleep was uninterrupted lasting from eleven to twelve hours. Rabinovitch who has kept this case under observation tells me that the improvement has continued although the patient (whose family is in humble circumstances) lives in a damp ground floor tenement and in hygienic conditions otherwise unfavourable.

4. In view of the results above recorded it will not surprise the reader to learn that two cases of Pott's disease (tubercular curvature of the spine) have been benefited by treatment at Nancy.

### III

Having dwelt on two classes of cases, uterine inflammation and tubercular disease respectively let us now consider certain isolated examples which show how various are the disorders to which the method is applicable. The first case is quoted from Coué (op cit p 23).

1. A. G. of Troyes has for a long time suffered from an intractable enteritis. Mental condition bad. The patient is low spirited gloomy and unsociable. He is much troubled with ideas of suicide.

Preliminary experiments easy followed by suggestion.

the results of which were appreciable from the very first day. Suggestion practised for three months daily at first and subsequently at increasing intervals. At the end of this time the cure was complete the enteritis having entirely disappeared and the mental condition being all that could be desired. The cure dates from five years ago and there has never been the slightest tendency to relapse. The patient is a conspicuous example of what can be done by suggestion or rather by autosuggestion. The suggestions bore upon the mental condition as well as upon the physical and both kinds were accepted with equal facility. Thus he acquired increasing self confidence. Being an excellent workman and wishing to earn more money he wanted to have a hosiery frame in his own house, so that he might work at home for an employer. After a while a manufacturer who had seen him at work entrusted him with the frame he coveted. G was so skilful that he was able to turn out far more from his frame than other workmen were able to produce. Delighted with this result the manufacturer entrusted him with another frame and then with a third. Now G who would have remained an ordinary workman but for suggestion is the master of six frames, which bring him in quite a considerable income.

Within a few years (as I prophesied to him three years ago) G will have become one of the leading manufacturers of Troyes.

2 A woman of Nancy had suffered for three years from an intractable eczema of the hands. Cure was effected by suggestion in a few sittings (1914).<sup>1</sup>

3 Jacqueline G aged 7 of Neufchâteau (Vosges) where I was living in 1915, was brought to me by her mother on the advice of an elder brother who had been cured of stammering by autosuggestion.

The child had suffered from typhoid when 14 months old. Since then she had been totally deaf and she was able to produce nothing but inarticulate sounds comprehensible only to her habitual associates. The medical opinion was

<sup>1</sup> Bulletin Ecole de Nancy 1914.

that there was no hope of cure, and it was proposed to send her to a special institution for the training of deaf mutes. An idea of the intensity of the deafness may be derived from a picturesque phrase of her own. I hear the piano with my feet meaning that she could feel the tactile vibrations transmitted through the floor from the instrument but could not hear any sound. Intelligent full of vitality and very sensitive to suggestion.

After six weeks treatment, during which she had sittings twice a week she was able to utter all the sounds of the alphabet. The only consonants she had any serious difficulty with were ch j s and z. She learned several new words every day fixing them in her memory by writing them down. She could sing with the words an air which had been sung before her with a pianoforte accompaniment.

It is well to point out that the child religiously formulated her daily autosuggestion. For this purpose she buried her head beneath the bedclothes and would allow nothing and nobody to distract her attention.

4 B sometime clerk of the civil court in Nancy. Has suffered for twenty-five years from an affection of the frontal sinuses has had *eleven* operations which have failed to cure. Physical condition deplorable mental state even worse. Cannot read for ten minutes a day is fatigued by the slightest movement suffers from insomnia has severe and almost constant pain in the head is incurably low-spirited. This patient came to consult Coué on the recommendation of R. de B. (see above p. 230). The first four sittings seemed to have no effect. During the fifth sitting improvement was obvious and became more conspicuous sitting after sitting. After three months the patient said to Coué. I passed such a day yesterday as I have not known for years. I was entirely free from headache, I took a long walk without feeling the least bit tired. I was able to read without difficulty for four hours. He was cured. There was no relapse (1915) \*

Privately communicated.

Enough cases have been enumerated to prove our point<sup>1</sup>

As a rule even when at the first sitting the subject has shown a satisfactory grasp of the mechanism of auto suggestion we shall facilitate his progress by asking him to attend further sittings twice a week at first then once a week and thenceforward once a fortnight or once a month for a time. As when swimming is being taught the pupil must not be left to himself too soon.

Most people in fact are greatly influenced by what is said and thought by those with whom they associate. The arguments of routinists and professional sceptics end by shaking their nascent confidence above all when these arguments are dinned into their ears day after day or are presented in an elegant and logical form by a man who is cultivated though superficial. Those only who can think for themselves those who do not estimate the truth of an idea by the number or the vivacity of the tongues that defend it—and such persons are rare—can readily dispense with lessons in suggestion. The others the majority will do well to steep themselves from time to time in the atmosphere of the sittings<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover in the sitting the ideas which form the object of suggestion are proposed to the subject without any effort on his part for they are formulated by another. (Theoretically a phonograph might do this as well as a living person.) All that the subject has to do is to watch the flow of ideas as he watches the succession of pictures on a screen whereas in autosuggestion in the strict sense of the term the ideas must be initiated by the subject himself and this requires at least a minimum of effort. At the outset there is a risk that the subject will exaggerate the effort. When suggestion is induced by another effort can be entirely relinquished and it is therefore easier for the subject to realise the state of relaxation requisite for the working of autosuggestion. We know

<sup>1</sup> A detailed register of cases is kept in the archives of the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute at Geneva.

From this outlook, the reading of a manual may take the place of sittings. The author hopes that his book may serve such a purpose.

indeed, that autosuggestion is fruitful precisely in proportion as it is distinguished from voluntary effort

The number of sittings requisite for cure will obviously vary in different subjects and still more in different cases

From this point of view cases of peculiar interest are those in which *the morbid state is autosuggestive in origin and simulates a bodily disorder*. Here a countersuggestion sometimes brings about immediate cure. Such a cure may even be regarded as a criterion on which we can base the assertion that the trouble was solely due to spontaneous autosuggestion that there was no organic lesion whatever that the whole thing was due to unconscious simulation (See Part I Chapter VIII Conditional Suggestions refer also to the example of subconscious teleology given in Part I Chapter X)

Here are examples of such immediate cures where the countersuggestion has instantaneously neutralised the earlier autosuggestion

1 A woman of Nancy 80 years of age. For three years she had suffered from generalised pains which made it impossible for her to get about without the aid of two walking-sticks. She was able to leave the first sitting unassisted by these sticks and she no longer uses them.

2 Professor Gillet of Belfort suffered from aphonia. He could begin speaking in normal tones but the aphonia invariably came on after he had spoken for ten or fifteen minutes. *Various doctors were consulted and not one of them could discover any lesion in the vocal organs*. One of these advisers however, said the patient was affected with senility of the larynx and thus confirmed him in the notion that he would never recover. He came to Nancy during the vacation. A lady advised him to consult Coué. He refused for a time but finally agreed to do so, notwithstanding his absolute unbelief in the effects of suggestion.

Coué made some suggestions to him none the less and

Privately communicated



asked him to return two days later. When he kept the appointment he said that on the previous day he had been able to converse for two hours without becoming affected with aphonia. On his next visit four days from the first there had been no return of the aphonia although he had not only spoken freely in the interval but had even sung. He was cured.

Since then Professor Gillet freed from his simulated infirmity has been able to continue his university career. He has become one of Coué's disciples. In the *Bulletin Ecole de Nancy* for the year 1913 he published a study of autosuggestion from which we had occasion to quote on p. 92<sup>1</sup>.

3 Louis Schmidt aged 44 of Jézainville (Meurthe et Moselle), had an attack of indigestion, as a sequel of which he became affected with almost complete paralysis of the arms and legs. He was sent to the departmental infirmary, and remained there for a while without improvement. When he came to consult Coué he could hardly walk, his legs he said were like cotton-wool. After the first sitting he could walk and could even run. He had a relapse a few months later but was restored to health once more by suggestive treatment.\*

4 A soldier wounded in the war and invalided out of the army was unable despite mecanotherapeutic treatment, to move his right leg except with the jerky impulsion of an artificial limb. Cure ensued upon the first suggestion.

Strange as are these cases of autosuggestive simulation which yield promptly to a countersuggestion perhaps yet more remarkable are cases which appear precisely similar cases in which as in the former group there is no trace of organic lesion but which prove *more rebellious to suggestive treatment than do many cases that are indisputably of organic origin*. Consider the following instance.

Miss M. aged 30, of Nancy had suffered for six years from violent pains in the bladder. She had been

Gillet's own case is reported by Coué op cit p. 26.  
Reported by Coué in the *Bulletin* for 1914.

treated by various methods and had been subjected to an operation with the result that she was informed by the surgeon *there was no organic lesion*. It's all nerves! he told her. I can do nothing for you. Thereby he intensified the pernicious autosuggestion and the patient grew worse. At length she sought Coué's advice. The suggestion he induced had to struggle with the antecedent suggestion and it was a long time before the counter suggestion could get the upper hand. Progress followed each sitting but the advance was almost imperceptible. So deep-rooted was the prior suggestion that *eight months* were requisite for the cure.<sup>1</sup>

This is not an isolated example. It appears rather to be typical of an important series. The question therefore arises why these cases of autosuggestive simulation are sometimes perfectly easy to cure by a countersuggestion and why the cure is sometimes so difficult. The difference between the two types is remarkable and cannot fail to rivet the attention. The cause must doubtless be sought in the special characteristics of the antecedent spontaneous suggestion. As far as our knowledge goes (which is not very far) we may formulate the following hypothesis

1 Sometimes the antecedent spontaneous suggestion is the outcome of a simple idea, one that is not ramified, one that is isolated in the mental mass. In that case the idea is as easy to eradicate as the I cannot unclasp my fingers of the contracture experiments. A single countersuggestion is enough.

2 Sometimes on the other hand the spontaneous suggestion has struck roots in all directions, the threads of subconscious association spread throughout the mental mass; we are no longer confronted with a simple idea but with what the psychoanalysts have termed a *complex*, an integration of images, memories, sentiments, conscious and unconscious reasonings interlacing one with another and to all appearance inextricably inter-tangled.

Upon psychoanalysis devolves the task of reconstituting

Privately communicated

these complexes and consequently also the task of verifying the foregoing hypothesis. It may be added that when there has been *spontaneous suggestion by complex* the indication is rather for psychoanalytic treatment than for simple suggestive treatment.

In exemplification of what has just been said let me briefly recount the case of Miss B. M. aged 27, a case subjected to psychoanalysis. She suffered from quite a number of morbid symptoms whose root cause was revealed by the analysis to be a scarcely acknowledged wish for a life spent in more comfortable circumstances where she would have fuller opportunities for intellectual development. One of the symptoms was a severe neuralgia of the arm. Suggestion from me and autosuggestion on the patient's part led to its improvement but not to its cure. I learned from the analysis that this symptom was due to subconscious imitation. In earlier days a school fellow of the patient, suffering from an accident affecting a paralysed arm had, owing to this accident and to the consequently enforced confinement to a couch, secured the leisure which enabled her to achieve an intellectual development excelling that of her companions. From the day when this cause was explained to my patient the neuralgia disappeared never to return.<sup>1</sup>

For cases in which the morbid symptoms are due to spontaneous suggestion by a simple idea psychoanalytic treatment can never compete in rapidity of cure with suggestive treatment for the latter, as we have seen, may give instant relief. But where the trouble is due to spontaneous suggestion by complex psychoanalytic treatment though tedious may save time in the end, and may give more satisfactory results. If I may use the similitude psychoanalytic treatment is to suggestive treatment what algebra is to arithmetic. It complicates simple problems but it simplifies complex problems.

When therefore we have a *malady* probably due to autosuggestion a malady which proves rebellious to treatment

<sup>1</sup> This case was recorded by the author in the Archives de psychologie December 1916 Kundig Geneva.

by the Nancy method although the *patient* is not in general refractory to that method, we should have recourse to psychoanalysis

When on the other hand it is the *patient* who is refractory when he finds it difficult to grasp the mechanism of autosuggestion when he makes too much effort, when he proves unable to isolate himself and to concentrate satisfactorily etc—the indication is with the subject's consent to have recourse to *profound hypnosis* or induced sleep, which according to the commonly received opinion, increases suggestibility But now before dealing with the question of hypnosis we must clear up the problem of suggestibility

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ACCEPTIVITY AND SUGGESTIBILITY

LET us recall the definition of suggestion given in the Introduction to the present work

In heterosuggestion the only kind of suggestion usually considered we recognised the presence of two phases

1 An idea imposed by the operator is accepted by the subject

2 This idea undergoes transformation within the subject into the corresponding reality

According to the prevalent view the essential phase of suggestion is the first of these two phases It is upon this that the definition of suggestion must be based But in our view the second is the essential phase Suggestion we contend is not a phenomenon characterised by the movement of something from the operator to the subject It is a psychophysiological phenomenon comprised within the mind of the subject Thereon must be based our theory of autosuggestion

Let us therefore distinguish the two following phases

1 *Acceptation*

2 *The ideoreflex process* (which for us, is suggestion)

This distinction is vital, but writers on this subject have failed hitherto to draw it with sufficient clearness While they incline to one opinion or the other, to the view that suggestion is comprised in the former phase or to the view that suggestion is comprised in the latter, they fail as a rule, to differentiate accurately between the two outlooks In practice they continue to regard suggestion as an integral and synthetic phenomenon, the product

of two factors an idea proposed by the operator accepted by the subject and realised by the latter Their formula would run

suggestion = acceptation + ideoreflex process

What is *acceptation*?

We have already employed this term when speaking of suggestions proposed in the state of profound hypnosis (see Part III Chapter I) We then caught a glimpse of the truth that acceptation must not be looked upon as an act of conscious and deliberate will We can now go further than this The term acceptation connotes the notion that the idea penetrates the mind in virtue of a consent which in other cases might be withheld that the will and the intelligence are in abeyance that the idea is not consciously controlled but is the object of a spontaneous adhesion In a word *it is not the conscious but the subconscious which accepts* The idea instead of being confronted with others and judged from an intellectual and volitional viewpoint, is granted hospitality like a welcome stranger It remains isolated and therefore is not subject to contradiction

We may speak of acceptation not only in heterosuggestion but also in spontaneous autosuggestion In the latter as well as in the former an accepted idea is an idea implanted in the mind without the exercise of any control

Credulity routine indifference confidence in the hypnotiser the latter's 'personal influence'—all these are factors of acceptation

Now acceptation by isolating the idea, by avoiding the establishment of associative and intellectual regulatory relationships between this idea and others, favours a concentration of the mind upon the accepted idea and consequently favours suggestion But acceptation is not itself suggestion either wholly or in part

The same confusion is met with when we pass from the question of suggestion to that of suggestibility

By the suggestibility of any person, we mean the readiness

with which on the average that person will realise a suggestion

Thus, as the definition of suggestion varies the definition of suggestibility will vary concomitantly For most writers suggestibility means the ease with which the subject realises the ideas proposed by the operator For us on the other hand suggestibility denotes the ease with which the second phase of the phenomenon ensues whereas for the ease of acceptance we propose to use the term *acceptivity*

The distinction becomes necessary for those who like ourselves take their stand upon autosuggestion Let us consider reflective suggestion which is our ideal It presupposes that the ideas the objects of our suggestions have been deliberately intelligently chosen its primary function is to strive against harmful spontaneous suggestions and to repair the damage these have caused Far from implying the passive acceptance of the ideas which pass through our minds it exacts from us unceasing *self control* It insists that there shall be a strict frontier customs service ever on the watch to prevent the ingress of undesirable ideas To sum up whereas acceptance, or the absence of control is an adjuvant to heterosuggestion and spontaneous suggestion on the other hand non acceptance or control is the primary condition for the practice of reflective autosuggestion It is here that the confusion becomes serious

Binet faithful to his definition of suggestion, tends to identify suggestibility with what we have termed acceptivity The experiments whereby he measures suggestibility serve rather to measure acceptivity to measure mental passivity \*

Let us consider some of these experiments

*First Series* (suggestion produced by the influence of a guiding idea)

Children are shown a drawing of twenty lines in series..

Binet *La suggestibilité*, Paris 1900 Giroud *La suggestibilité dans les enfants de l'école*, *Année psychologique* 1912

The length of these lines increases up to the fifth but the others are all of equal length. Having looked once at this drawing they have to reproduce it from memory. Most of them draw the lines of increasing length beyond the fifth and often up to the very end of the series.

*Second Series* (suggestion produced by personal influence)

Wools of various colours are shown to a child. When we are sure that it knows the names of all the colours it has to write these names down. As it is writing the name of some other colour is suggested verbally. Often the child writes down this latter name.

The experiments of the first series bear upon spontaneous suggestion those of the second series upon induced suggestion. They can have no bearing on reflective suggestion, for in this the acceptivity would run counter to the suggestibility, and no confusion could possibly arise. Binet however appears to ignore reflective suggestion.

The kind of acceptivity shown in the experiments which is for Binet suggestibility obviously puts the subject in a worse position than if he were devoid of it. Binet therefore draws the following conclusion.

If we point out to the children the mistake they have made if we show them how they came to make it and where their attention lapsed they simultaneously receive a lesson in things and a lesson in morals. The teaching is often profitable. In many instances as test succeeds test the pupils learn to avoid these errors and become less suggestible.

We see at once how necessary it is that this mental passivity should no longer receive the name of suggestibility, since the latter term is likewise used to denote the faculty an idea has of realising itself by a subconscious process within the mind of the subject.

Whereas in the case of spontaneous and induced suggestion the limits are by no means easy to determine (a fact which to some extent justifies the confusion), in the case of reflective suggestion on the other hand it is possible to isolate suggestibility.

By suitable exercises (the use of Chevreul's pendu



lum Abramowsky's experiments<sup>\*</sup> etc.), we can measure this suggestibility while using the same principles as Binet. But the nature of the exercises must be entirely modified. Like Binet we may denote an individual's average suggestibility by the fraction  $\frac{1}{S}$ . We then examine this person in various emotional states, in a condition of slight hypnosis etc. measuring by the method of averages the influence of these different factors, denominated  $f_1, f_2, f_3, \dots, f_n$ . Thus the formula of suggestibility in the given circumstances would be

$$S = \frac{f_1 \times f_2 \times f_3 \times \dots \times f_n}{S}$$

It would likewise be interesting to study the variations in suggestibility according to age and sex. Each age, for example might have a mean coefficient of suggestibility  $\frac{1}{\Sigma}$  which would be a standard of comparison for the individual suggestibility  $\frac{1}{S}$ .

Suggestibility in the sense we give to the term is unquestionably related to the sensitiveness and to the plasticity of the nervous system. In children suggestibility, like acceptivity is unquestionably superior to the same faculty in the adult. But whereas acceptivity is a source of weakness and must be combated suggestibility is a source of strength and must be fostered. If there be a tendency for the *physical conditions* on which suggestibility depends to grow less favourable as age advances we must by special training (in collectedness, contention and auto-hypnosis), encourage the *mental conditions* which will reinforce suggestibility. By cultivating this faculty while endeavouring to combat acceptivity we prepare the subject to carry out beneficial autosuggestions and to repress those that are of a noxious character.

So great is the power of words, that it suffices to give the

<sup>\*</sup> See Part II Chapter VIII.

same name to two things which are quite different and often opposed to give the same name to acceptivity and suggestibility for the discredit which justly attaches to the former to be unjustly transferred to the latter

It is largely owing to this confusion that public opinion has as a rule taken exception to educative suggestion. Boirac in his *Psychologie inconnue*<sup>1</sup> tells us he would speak of the use of suggestion in mental orthopaedics were it not that this particular order of applications inaugurated in our days by Dr Berillon still seems to be generally discountenanced

In truth suggestion should be utilised not merely for the orthopaedics of the mind but likewise for the normal training of the mind. We shall return to this question at some length in Chapter VII. We are content for the moment, to point out that the educationist who must miss no chances will turn to the best possible account even the acceptivity the passivity the mental plasticity if you will which is at its maximum in the child

He is aware that children readily accept ideas and transform them into suggestions. He will therefore be careful to suggest those ideas only that are healthy and beneficial. Nay more as the young intelligence awakens, he will turn passivity to account in order to counteract passivity. He will strive more and more to make the child accept the idea that no idea is to be accepted without reflection and without control. At the same time he will teach the child to make deliberate use of suggestion to find the material of suggestion for itself. Having made the best possible use of the child's acceptivity he will proceed to bring about the progressive atrophy of the faculty. Having employed acceptivity to aid suggestibility he will employ autosuggestion to destroy acceptivity. Thus acceptivity will have played the part of those clay moulds which are used for the casting of bronze statues

<sup>1</sup> Alcan, Paris 1908. English translation by Dudley Wright *Psychic Science Rider* London 1918.

## CHAPTER SIX

### A CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY OF HYPNOSIS

THE phenomena comprised under the general name of hypnosis present two aspects physiological and psychological. In the actual state of our knowledge a psychological description can be carried further than a physiological description. The theories which are termed psychological writes Claparède with perfect justice 'have the great advantage of permitting a far more detailed explanation, a closer and more systematic analysis. If on the other hand we attempt to use objective phraseology when we have spoken of cortical inhibition of the stagnation of neurocymes and of the rupture of synapses, we have said practically all that there is to say. There are still too many gaps in our knowledge of the physiology of the brain. The attempt to reconstruct hypnosis in physiological concepts is perhaps to day almost as chimerical as would be the attempt to reproduce the delicate traceries of the Louvre with the clumsy materials in a child's box of toy bricks. As for the eminent architects who have vainly essayed the first-named reconstruction they must even console themselves with the reflection that their failure has been due to the circumstances of the case, and not to their own incapacity.'

Contemporary philosophy breaking away from the traditions of Spinoza and Leibnitz tends increasingly to invalidate the hypothesis of psychophysical parallelism. It would seem that we are hardly justified in saying that

\* Claparède et Baade *Recherches expérimentales sur quelques processus psychiques simples dans un cas d'hypnose*, Kündig Geneva and Archives des psychologie, 1909

every physiological fact is expressible in psychological terminology and conversely. Conceivably of course hypnosis is the outcome of purely physiological causes which must be elucidated on the physiological plane. But in my own view this does not hold good. I consider that the very production of hypnosis can be expounded in psychological terms (without prejudice to the concomitant physiological phenomena)

We have intentionally distinguished by the name of *hypnosis*<sup>1</sup> states of somnolence which differ from ordinary drowsiness by their mode of production. We found in fact that the originator of these conditions was the immobilisation of the attention either by fixation (luminous point noise of falling water) or by seesaw (lullaby regular rhythm). From the difference in the mode of production of the condition there results a peculiar modification of the attention during the condition itself. To this modification we have given the name of *contention*. The slighter degrees of hypnosis the only ones which have been hitherto described in the present work are not followed by amnesia. They leave no gap in the consciousness and the contention which characterises them is a phenomenon of introspection—as anyone can perceive for himself. In this state a minimum of effort suffices to retain an idea in the centre of mental vision comparative mental immobility exists. Contention as we have said is a psychological equivalent of voluntary attention minus effort.

Now when the stimulus which has produced the hypnosis is prolonged the somnolence grows deeper and deeper and may culminate in sleep. This is *profound hypnosis* or *induced sleep*. The passage from somnolence to sleep is effected by insensible transitions. The difference between the two states is one of degree merely not of kind.

1. Let us first consider the *production* of profound hypnosis. For this, practitioners are agreed in utilising

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as a preliminary the immobilisation of the attention. The commonest method is to direct the patient to fix his gaze on the practitioner's eyes or on some luminous point.

This sustained attention is no more than a means for the production of relaxation which as we have explained when speaking of slight hypnosis is indispensable to the oncoming of sleep. Fatigue of the attention favours the relaxation and this explains certain details in the technique of Braid the founder of hypnotism. He writes 'A patient may be hypnotised by keeping the eyes fixed in *any* direction. It occurs most *slowly* and *feebly* when the eyes are directed straight forward and most *rapidly* and *intensely* when they can be maintained in the position of a double internal and upward squint.'

Berillon has realised that sustained attention is merely a means to an end and that relaxation is the end. He actually invites the subject to relaxation as soon as a certain degree of fatigue has resulted from the immobilisation of the attention. He writes 'Instead of asking the subject as previously to fix his eyes on some point close at hand I invite him to look straight in front of him to look out into the infinite. My sole object in so doing is to secure complete relaxation from any accommodative effort. The subject's aspect soon shows that he has become utterly indifferent to everything that is going on around him. He is therefore in the state of uninterestedness favourable to sleep. The period of going to-sleep is drawing to a close sleep is imminent and upon the slightest inducement in obedience to the law of least effort, the subject's eyelids will close and he will fall asleep.'

Bernheim who affirms that 'suggestion is the key to all the problems of hypnosis' constructs a theory which

\* James Braid *Neurypnology* Chapter II Churchill London and Black Edinburgh 1843. The passage will be found in p. 115 of the most convenient work on Braid's life and writings Waite Braid on *Hypnotism* Redway London, 1899.

Bérillon, *Théorie psychomécanique de l'hypnotisme* Revue de l'hypnotisme.

is at once too simple and too systematic. He overlooks the indubitable role of immobilisation of the attention. Nevertheless his demonstration that suggestion can produce hypnosis unaided does not conflict with the foregoing observations for suggestion presupposes the fixation of the attention on an idea and consequently every suggestion at the moment of formulation is accompanied by an immobilisation of the attention. The two actions supplement one another the fixation by an idea replaces the fixation by a luminous point.

There is one form of induced sleep which does not presuppose the immobilisation of the attention. When a subject is plunged into profound hypnosis brought about by one of the ordinary methods we may propose to him the following posthypnotic suggestion. Every time that I touch your right shoulder or 'every time I show you a card on which is inscribed the word sleep (the precise formula is indifferent) you will sleep as soundly as you are sleeping at this moment. These accesses of sleep due to posthypnotic suggestion will be the result of pure suggestion, without any antecedent immobilisation of the attention. But we must not forget that the first sleep has been induced by one of the customary methods. The subject to whom we suggest, when he is asleep, that he will subsequently sleep in like manner may perhaps reproduce by pure suggestion the immobilisation of the attention which he has previously experienced.

Coué who does not share Bernheim's exclusivism accepts the existence of the two methods. We have just seen that if we set out from the immobilisation of the attention as a principle the two procedures are closely akin. Hence we must not be astonished at the likeness of the results. Coué notes the likeness without attempting to explain it. Here is his definition of hypnotic sleep.

'We may define it thus. Hypnotic sleep is sleep induced by an artificial cause (narcotic drugs excluded), such as the conscious or unconscious fixation of a more or less luminous object or the use of suggestion or auto-suggestion.

' Although the causes are different, the sleep appears to be the same in the two cases and this sleep though extremely restful is in my opinion very different from ordinary sleep <sup>1</sup>

2 What are the psychological *characters* of this peculiar sleep? If Coué affirms it to be very different from ordinary sleep this is not because he ignores the kinship between the two, a kinship which is far closer than most people imagine. But the first Nancy School was prone to dwell on the traits common to the two conditions and it is therefore natural and justifiable that Coué should emphasise the differences.

From the days of Liébault onwards the authorities of the first Nancy School followed by several other specialists and notably by Vogt and Forel drawing attention to the likenesses showed that in general both states facilitate suggestion that catalepsy can be induced in natural sleep (Liébault), that the intellection of the words uttered by bystanders is not completely abolished during natural sleep. As an example of the last statement, it may be pointed out that one who snores will often stop snoring when told to do so.

Speaking generally the authors who with Bernheim regard suggestion as the cause of hypnotic sleep, naturally tend to identify that condition with normal sleep. But to consider the matter without prejudice this identification must not be pushed to an extreme. Claparède who has not committed himself to any theory of hypnotism is an impartial judge. He writes

' Let us make it perfectly clear *what* we are suggesting when we hypnotise. If we say to the patient 'Sleep!' why does he not pass into ordinary slumber? Unless we agree that hypnosis is the same thing as normal sleep (and we have already refuted this hypothesis) the formula of suggested sleep is insufficient to account for the phenomena. If we wish to maintain that hypnosis is

<sup>1</sup> Coué, *Le sommeil hypnotique et ses rapports avec la suggestion* Bulletin Ecole de Nancy 1914

due to suggestion we have to admit that the very fact of putting anyone to sleep by suggestion gives the sleep a peculiar character. The question then arises *By what mechanism does this peculiar character originate?*<sup>1</sup>

The question is pertinent. The present writer thinks he can provide the elements of an answer. Hypnosis may be due to suggestion but the very fact of suggestion presupposes the immobilisation of the attention, an immobilisation which is therefore common to all the methods for producing hypnosis and wherein will be found the real reason for the peculiar characteristics of this condition.

Profound hypnosis exhibits in an intensified form the distinctive traits of slight hypnosis in which the subject experiences a sense of vacancy of mental immobility giving rise to *contention*. Now we think we have been able to explain these characters as the outcome of the preliminary immobilisation of the attention (Part II Chapter V). The same cause is present here but it is intensified. The idea of mental immobility<sup>2</sup> as happens with any idea that is in the mind when sleep begins dominates the whole of the sleep. The subject inevitably accepts a suggestion of mental immobility and this suffices to explain the chief psychological differences between hypnotic sleep and normal sleep.

Can we prove the existence during profound hypnosis of this (comparative) mental immobility, of the sensation of mental vacancy which accompanies it and of the contention which is their result?

\*It is generally agreed writes Claparède 'that concentration of the attention exists during hypnosis. But I am not aware that any experiments have hitherto been undertaken for the verification of this hypothesis,

Claparède *Interprétation psychologique de l'hypnose* reprinted from the *Journal für Psychologie und Neurologie* Barth Leipzig

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Carl Picht *Hypnose Suggestion und Erziehung* Klinkhardt, Leipzig 1913. According to Picht hypnotic sleep differs from ordinary sleep in this respect that the former is the outcome of a concentration, whereas the latter is the outcome of a dispersion of the attention.



and in order to ascertain the precise nature of the modification of the attention <sup>1</sup>

Claparède has himself organised a series of experiments to explore the psychology of the hypnotised subject. His results considered by themselves do not seem to furnish an answer to the foregoing question. But when we juxtapose them with what introspection reveals concerning contention they seem to throw much light on the matter and to justify our hypothesis.

Here are the leading results as far as they bear on the problem

*a* Hypnosis tends to slacken associative reactions

We must note however that while this is true on the average certain associative acts may take place under hypnosis just as rapidly as in the waking state. This shows that the inhibitory theory is inadequate. Whilst associative inhibition is favoured by the state of hypnosis it does not constitute that state.

*b* If we examine Madame Bul's associative activity, not when she is performing an experiment but when she is left to her own devices, what do we note? Absolute passivity. Left to herself Madame Bul says: My mind is a blank. She is indifferent to everything. She seems to have lost that constant concern about the present moment and the moment which is just coming, that concern which is the mainspring of all our actions and all our thoughts <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In Madame Bul at any rate the hypnotic state was essentially characterised by *a suspension of the function of initiative*. This conclusion has been drawn by other observers. We have seen that several authors, and Wundt in especial characterise hypnosis by the suspension of voluntary activity.

Interprétation psychologique de l'hypnose.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Beaunis. When we ask a hypnotised subject as I have often done: What are you thinking about? the almost invariable answer is: Nothing. —We have here a veritable condition of inertia or rather one of intellectual repose.

c The power of adding numbers together is not during hypnosis appreciably different from the same subject's power during the waking state <sup>1</sup>

What are termed the *intellectual* faculties seem to be little if at all affected <sup>2</sup>

The juxtaposition of these observations is most instructive. We learn from it that two apparently contradictory phenomena are present in hypnosis

1 Voluntary activity is suspended

2 What are termed the intellectual faculties appear to be little if at all affected

This seems very remarkable. *The use of the intellectual faculties normally presupposes the working of voluntary attention now here voluntary activity is suspended and yet the intellectual faculties are none the worse* <sup>3</sup> But the apparent contradiction disappears if we admit that hypnosis is characterised by a modification of the attention, namely *contention* which is the *psychological equivalent of voluntary attention minus effort* <sup>3</sup>

Furthermore we have just seen that according to the hypnotised subject's own statements profound hypnosis is characterised by a sensation of mental vacancy

We have thus verified the hypothesis that there is no essential difference between profound hypnosis and what we have termed slight hypnosis. We are therefore justified in applying the term hypnosis to both conditions

One point may still seem obscure. The foregoing explanation appears to ignore one of the essential characteristics of classical hypnotism namely the rapport between the operator and the hypnotised subject so that the subject despite his sleep understands the words of the operator

Claparède and Baade op cit.

<sup>1</sup> Claparède, *Interprétation psychologique de l'hypnose*

<sup>2</sup> From the physiological standpoint, catalepsy is a pendant to contention although it is a less constant character of hypnosis. We might say that *contention is a catalepsy of the attention*. In contention, the muscles of attention do their work without effort.

This rapport presupposes that there shall be an operator. But hypnosis as described in this book does not necessarily require a hypnotiser. When I put myself to sleep by autosuggestion by voluntary autohypnosis or when I am sent to sleep by a soothing rhythm there is hypnosis but there is no hypnotiser.

In hypnosis of the classical type there is a hypnotiser and throughout the hypnotic sleep the subject's mind is obsessed by the personality of this hypnotiser. If we recall the law that sleep is dominated by the obsessive idea or ideas which were in the mind at the moment of going to sleep we shall realise that this obsessive presence of the hypnotiser may serve to explain the maintenance of communication between hypnotiser and subject. When we fall asleep pondering an unsolved problem we give free rein during sleep to all the ideas which are more or less intimately connected with the problem and without the facility given to the flow of these ideas the solution of the problem during sleep would be impossible. In like manner during profound induced hypnosis the subject's mind remains open to everything connected with the hypnotiser and to his voice in especial. The mother who goes to sleep with her thoughts full of her child and who awakens at the child's least cry furnishes us with an example which is not essentially different from that of the hypnotised subject recognising the voice of the practitioner.

In a word the fundamental characteristic of hypnosis is a peculiar modification of attention i.e. what we have named *contention*.

If hypnosis increases suggestibility this may be dependent on various features of hypnosis (features which are in part common to hypnosis and to ordinary sleep) but for the most part it is due to contention which annuls voluntary effort a condition unfavourable to suggestion while maintaining attention a condition above all others indispensable to suggestion.

As for the apparent contradictions pointed out in Part III Chapter I where it was shown that suggestibility

seems now increased now diminished by hypnosis, these contradictions vanish so I believe as soon as acceptivity is carefully distinguished from suggestibility properly so called (See the preceding chapter)

We have to admit that as a rule and probably in all cases hypnosis is characterised by increased suggestibility But it is not necessarily characterised by increased acceptivity

Having learned the nature and the true significance of profound hypnosis it remains to ask what are the best ways of inducing the condition We wish to induce it easily, and we wish it to be fruitful when induced

1 When we speak of the immobilisation of the attention, our language is extremely abstract There is not only one kind of attention There are visual attention auditory attention mental attention etc A completer result will be obtained if we can immobilise them all simultaneously (By occupying one we tend to quiet the others, and may thus bring about a sufficient degree of immobilisation) We may engage the various forms of attention at one and the same time appealing to sight by a luminous point to hearing by a soothing and monotonous voice to touch by rhythmic passes, and to the mind by the idea of sleep Let us ignore the question whether the passes over and above their effect upon the attention, have the peculiar physical action ascribed to them by the magnetisers

2 The suggestions we have to propose will be more likely to be efficacious if we employ methods tending to establish a close rapport between operator and subject Such methods are those which tend to make the operator's presence a positive obsession for the subject For instance, we shall appeal to sight with a luminous object and the best will be for this object to be held by the hypnotiser who will impress upon it a rhythmic movement The voice, and passes are additional means for emphasising the hypnotiser's personality In his ordinary practice

Coué uses methods which satisfy these requirements Here is his own account of them

You move a luminous object to and fro before the subject's eyes requesting him to follow this object with his eyes but without turning his head Meanwhile you make to him the following suggestions Think well that you are going to sleep, as you follow the moving object with your eyes you feel a lethargy stealing over you your arms your legs become heavy, your whole frame grows heavy your eyelids are heavy they grow heavier and heavier they are like lead you find it more and more difficult to keep your eyes open Your sight is becoming obscured your eyes are watering you can hardly distinguish anything in the room sleep begins to overpower you I shall slowly count up to twenty As I count the longing to sleep will steadily increase Before I reach twenty, your eyes will close and you will be sound asleep

In most cases, everything happens exactly as you have said and by the time you pronounce twenty the subject is asleep If his eyes are not yet closed say to him in a commanding tone Shut your eyes! Sleep! and he instantly closes his eyes and goes to sleep

To make the sleep more profound you say Now you are asleep sound asleep and as I tell you that you are sound asleep you do in fact feel that your slumber becomes deep, very deep deeper than it has ever been before This word deep repeated in such a fashion acts on the subject's mind like the drops of water which in the end hollow out the stone \*

But in general as we have said the Nancy method does not involve the induction of profound hypnosis This latter condition would seem to be chiefly valuable in cases where the subject is maladroit in the use of autosuggestion above all when he cannot learn to avoid making efforts of the will Profound hypnosis suspends the voluntary activity which is impairing the chances of success

\* Coué *Le sommeil hypnotique et ses rapports avec la suggestion*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUGGESTION IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN \*

SUGGESTION is a psychophysiological function which exists in everyone. It can therefore be trained in everyone. No reader who has carefully followed the exposition of data and reasoning throughout the preceding pages can fail to understand how baseless are all the objections that have been made to the use of suggestive methods in the education of children. Induced suggestion is not a violation of the subject's individuality; it is a means of training the subject's powers of autosuggestion. Moreover, only in connection with profound hypnosis could the idea of such a violation being effected possibly arise. Now we have seen that for the adult the use of profound hypnosis is as a rule a subsidiary method. Still more is this true of children, whose suggestibility in the waking state is so extensive. Their high suggestibility is a reason for beginning the training of autosuggestion in early childhood.

\* There have been precursors in this field of educative suggestion. I may mention the following:

J. M. Guyau, *Education et Hérité* (Paris, 1889) (English translation, *Education and Heredity*, Walter Scott, London, 1891) seems to have inaugurated the idea.

Walter Rose, *Die hypnotische Erziehung der Kinder* (Berlin, 1898) refers to suggestion for the inhibition of instincts such as *cleptomania* and *lying*. (He looks upon the latter as instinctive and as hereditarily transmitted in modern society.) He speaks also of the development of new instincts by suggestion.

The scholastic outlook in especial is voiced by two writers in the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Pädagogik*. Horn contributes, *Suggestion als pädagogischer Faktor*, *neue Bahnen* (Heft 3, 1900). Rausch contributes, *Die Suggestion im Dienste der Schule* (Heft 4, 1901).

Carl Picht champions the views of Guyau and Rose. See his *Hypnose, Suggestion und Erziehung* (Klinkhardt, Leipzig, 1913).

This training far from reducing the subject's energy, seems in virtue of its peculiar mechanism to enhance that energy and it does so in the absence of any suggestions of a directly energising character. Besides not merely would it be a mistake to attempt to shield the child from all suggestive influences. The thing is an impossibility. If suggestive action be not exercised methodically it will be exerted by chance in the form of the countless spontaneous suggestions which daily life presents to the child's mind. When we take this suggestive action under our own guidance we can ensure that it will be beneficent. When on the other hand we leave it to itself it gives rise indifferently to good and to bad results, and it may eventuate in disaster.

Unreservedly therefore I agree with Herbert Parkyn's contention that the deliberate practice of autosuggestion should be taught to children in all our schools.

I would go further and would say that autosuggestion ought to take a primary place in education. For by its use not merely will the child learn self-control not merely will he develop his physical energies and be helped to resist disease but in addition he will be able to develop (in a degree hardly conceivable by those who have not seen the method applied) his working powers in all fields. He will learn how to obtain the maximum of results with a minimum of effort. He will acquire a method which will be a standby to him throughout life. In the intellectual sphere he will develop all his faculties and memory and attention above all. In especial he will learn to *like* his work. Furthermore by suggestion we are able to strive advantageously against the bad inclinations and other defects of childhood most of which are indeed themselves to a greater or less degree the outcome of antecedent suggestions. It follows from these considerations that the suggestive method cannot properly be regarded as merely a minor weapon in the pedagogical armamentarium. It can be made the auxiliary of all training and of all instruction. To anyone who has practised educative suggestion, pedagogical treatises which systematically

ignore this discipline seem built upon shifting sand. In such conditions the dispute between the various complicated methods which claim to develop memory, attention and interest in children resembles nothing so much as an interminable argument among persons in a hurry as to which is the quickest footpath while they pay no attention to the railroad close at hand to the train which could take them where they want to go in a tenth part of the time.

Doubtless when we are concerned with educating a child's tendencies we must respect as far as they are wholesome all the most spontaneous tendencies he displays, all those which are a sign of his aptitudes and of his very nature. Here suggestion must be cautiously used. But many of the tastes many of the tendencies which seem natural to the child are simply the outcome of spontaneous suggestions. Children's games far from being in every case an expression of the child's deeper nature are often purely imitative. As I had occasion to point out in an earlier chapter (Part I Chapter VI) the same statement applies to young people's choice of a profession. In many cases therefore the role of suggestion should be to eradicate the factitious tastes and tendencies of childhood. We shall be able to safeguard this practice by careful observation. Psychoanalysis for example is competent to reveal the genuinely original tendencies and we shall respect these in so far as they are not harmful to the child, or do not promise to be harmful to it when it grows up.

The method of training suggestion which has been described in this book is applicable to children but may be simplified in view of the great suggestibility of youthful subjects. The exercises with Chevreul's pendulum are especially useful for children. They may be modified by making them into a game. For instance, the bob of the pendulum may take the form of a bird which has to peck a piece of bread, or of a cat chasing a mouse, and so on. We can organise competitions. But in their simplest form, the exercise will be found sufficiently interesting to the great majority of children.



Quite apart from exercises quite apart from any procedure which recalls therapeutic suggestion it is possible in large measure to guide the suggestions that act on a child's mind. Thanks to a child's acceptivity ideas which are frequently brought to its notice ideas uttered by parents teachers, and others in whom it has confidence readily become implanted and initiate suggestions. Consequently when we are with children we must scrupulously avoid doing and saying things which will initiate harmful suggestions. On the other hand, we should frequently repeat the ideas which are likely to be the starting-point of beneficial suggestions.

Guyau judiciously remarks<sup>1</sup> that it is extremely foolish when a child has done wrong to express our censure in the form of a generalisation such as 'What a greedy boy you are' 'what a liar' 'what a naughty child'. So doing we tend to determine the future. The child thus characterised looks upon itself as a glutton, as a born liar and so on, and acts accordingly. It is far better policy to show great surprise that so good a child one habitually truthful etc. could have to-day made you believe that it was a liar when you know perfectly well that it is nothing of the kind.<sup>2</sup>

A woman teacher in Geneva who has attended my lectures at the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute practises on her pupils the following ingenious method of indirect suggestion. Every Monday when the week's work begins she writes on the blackboard the 'resolution of the week'. In a brief phrase this summarises and aims at correcting some fault in conduct or in methods of work which has been epidemic during the previous week. The children copy the formula and collectively take the good resolution. The results have been gratifying. I may add that this

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Froebel. We have to recognise that in many cases the teacher has himself made the child ill-conducted and vicious by attributing to it a bad intention in the committing of actions which were indeed regrettable but which the child performed without realising their true bearing, performed through lack of foresight, through heedlessness or through want of judgment.

teacher having grasped the significance of the law of reversed effort has substituted for the formula first used *I want to be* this or that the formula *I shall be* this or that. The effects of this substitution have been obvious.

From the earliest years of childhood and unceasingly thereafter we should in word and deed, watch over the suggestions made to the child mind and above all should we be careful to avoid making any harmful suggestions. American manuals contain excellent observations on this subject. For instance, Herbert Parkyn writes

'As a rule parents pay little attention to the nurse they employ to look after their children. They employ Mary or Jane because she seems kind hearted and can be hired cheap because ignorant—too ignorant as a rule to fill positions in which more money can be earned.

Kindness is not all that is required to make a good nurse for a child and if parents could fully realise a nurse's influence on their children they would employ only a speaker of good English, a woman with charming manners and good principles—a woman in fact who possesses the qualities they would like to see developed in their children. A nurse of this kind is cheap at any price. I venture to say that the time is not far distant when there will be regular training schools established for nurses for children, and that these nurses when properly qualified will draw larger salaries than the trained nurses from our hospitals. When this time comes, the training of the children who are to be candidates subsequently for the presidency of the republic will not be left to ignorant Mary or Jane. If a nurse is to be employed at all it will be a nurse who can give the child the best influences during the time he is receiving his first suggestions—the most impressionable time of a man's whole life.

Not long ago I was riding in the same railway coach with a mother and her little girl. The child was sitting in the seat opposite to her mother riding with her back toward the engine. Suddenly the mother said to her

'Charlotte, come here and sit beside me. It will make you sick if you ride backward.

A suggestion like this placed in the mind of a child is sufficient to influence her the rest of her life while riding in any class of vehicle. It will do a great deal to spoil her enjoyment of travelling because she will fuss over securing a seat facing the direction in which she is travelling and if she be forced by circumstances to ride backward the autosuggestion arising from the old suggestion given by the mother will be sufficient to make her miserable if not actually sick.

There is no reason on earth why a person should not ride backward as comfortably as any other way. Still I have seen women standing in a street car refuse to accept a seat offered them the excuse being

' Thank you! I prefer to stand. It makes me sick to ride backward.

"Poor things, they are made miserable by a common superstition or a suggestion given to them in childhood!

I have selected this illustration because the superstition or belief is a very common one but there are thousands of similar absurdities prevalent among the masses to make life fussy or unhappy.

Let us arise then and see what we can do by new autosuggestions to stamp out the old absurd notions first in ourselves, and then by precept and practice endeavour to assist our fellow men to free themselves from their self-imposed burdens.

Where health is concerned we cannot be too careful about children both as to what we say in their presence and as to what we allow them to see. Not merely must we spare children the sight of illnesses which would impress their imagination but before children even more than before adults we must scrupulously avoid speaking of illness. We must shun the small change of conversation in which, when we have exhausted the subject of the weather we pass on to speak of health, that is to say of disease. I mean the sort of talk wherein having reviewed the headaches the constipations the nose-bleedings, and the toothaches of our own interesting

personality we proceed to discuss the rheumatisms the chronic bronchitis and the stitches of our uncles and aunts our male and female cousins down to the twenty-fifth degree of family relationship Next comes the list of sudden deaths or rapidly fatal illnesses in our own street and our own quarter of the town And we finish off with philosophical conclusions in the style of Joseph Prudhomme and Monsieur Perrichon anent our mortal frailty and the numberless enemies ever on the watch for a chance of destroying our precious health

A reasonable code of good manners would forbid as a piece of rudeness the asking of people how they are, and still more the replying to such a question by saying that we don't feel at all well and insisting on the fact with unction Conversations of the type just described do harm to those who talk in this way but after all that is their own affair It is however a serious matter when people speak freely of illness in the presence of children who are all eyes and ears to absorb what they see and hear

Everything which tends to make illness impressive—the solemn medical attendant who comes in a tall hat the solemn medicines in variously coloured phials and the like—all such pomp and circumstance should be removed as far as possible from the sight and hearing of children It is equally important that we should hide from a child any anxiety we may feel as to the condition of its own health These precepts are elementary for anyone who understands the suggestibility of the youthful mind Let me quote once more from another American writer

' One reason why we have such poor health is because we have been steeped in poor health thought from infancy We have been saturated with the idea that pain, physical suffering and disease are a part of life necessary evils which cannot be avoided We have had it so instilled into us that robust health is the exception and could not be expected to be the rule that we have come to accept this unfortunate condition of things as a sort of fate from which we cannot get away

' The child hears so much sick talk is cautioned so much about the dangers of catching all sorts of diseases that he grows up with the conviction that physical discords aches pains all discomfort and suffering are a necessary part of his existence, that at any time disease is liable to overtake him and ruin his happiness and thwart his career

' Think of what the opposite training would do for the child if he were taught that health is the everlasting fact and that disease is but the manifestation of the absence of harmony ! Think what it would mean to him if he were trained to believe that abounding health, rich full complete instead of sickness that certainty instead of uncertainty, were his birthright ! Think what it would mean for him to *expect* this during all his growing years instead of building into his consciousness the opposite instead of being saturated with the sick thought and constantly being cautioned against disease and the danger of contracting it ! \*

But in that case it may be objected, we should have to be ever on the watch lest we should influence for evil the children by whom we are surrounded Despite the best will in the world, we shall err in this respect a hundred times a day

Certainly we must avoid undue exaggeration concerning these inevitable errors But for the very reason that such blunders will often elude our most watchful attention it will be well to apply to children the methods of suggestive therapeutics By speech gesture, and example we may often give them good suggestions but we shall not fail from time to time to give them bad ones in addition The role of methodical suggestion will be to reinforce the former and to neutralise the latter

In addition to the methods above described there is one which is peculiarly suitable for children It makes use of natural sleep—when the subconscious remains awake just as it remains awake in induced sleep Coué recommends parents to proceed as follows

\* O. S. Marden, *op. cit.* pp. 255-6.

' As soon as the child has gone to sleep one of the parents goes very quietly into the bedroom and up to the bed. A hand is slowly and gently laid on the child's forehead. Should the child stir and seem about to wake up the parent says in a low tone "Sleep go on sleeping sleep soundly" repeating the phrases until the child is sound asleep once more. Then the parent still in the same slow and quiet tones reiterates all the improvements desirable in the child, whether from the point of view of health, sleep, work, application, conduct, or the like. When this has been done the parent withdraws still taking the utmost care not to wake the child. '

I should point out that to be really fruitful this simple method should be put in practice every evening without exception. Coué is in the habit of saying that a child should have suggestion every day just as every day it has a cup of milk or a cup of cocoa for breakfast. The parents should make it part of their routine. In such conditions the results are sometimes so remarkable that parents to whom I have advised the procedure have at the end of a few weeks told me that they were positively alarmed by the marvels that had ensued. I may add that if the parents set to work awkwardly at first no great harm will result since suggestion can undo whatever suggestion has done. Should an error be made it will be easy to correct it.

Op cit., p 26.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### GENERAL METHODS OF APPLICATION

INDUCED suggestion as described in this work is susceptible of very wide applications. It is upon these that we wish to insist in conclusion.

1 From the point of view of the *operators* it can be generalised in this sense that the method can be entrusted to practically everyone.

This is possible in the first place because it is free from the dangers so frequently ascribed to it. In essence it is in no respect the taking possession of one individuality by another. The practitioner is not a master who issues orders but a guide who makes proposals. Moreover only in connection with induced sleep could there be any reason to dread that such a state of dependence might arise, but we have learned that in the great majority of instances induced sleep is superfluous. Again, dependence is not even one of the characteristics of the special state we are considering for obedience to the practitioner's orders far from being always increased is not infrequently diminished. When dependence ensues it would appear to arise solely out of autosuggestion as when the subject is afraid that it will arise. Herein we find an additional reason for generalising the practice and the theory of autosuggestion to the end that a knowledge of the practice may be widely diffused in order to destroy superstitions concerning hypnotism and its dangers—superstitions upon which such dangers as exist do actually depend.

Yet another reason for generalising the practice of induced suggestion is the simplicity of the method. The only requisites are the performance of a few elementary

exercises a moment of muscular and mental relaxation, in conjunction with perseverance and regularity. Thus without having recourse to the classical methods of hypnotic suggestion we obtain results more remarkable than those secured by earlier hypnotists. So simple is the procedure that few can fail to master it. For the rest it will not bear its full fruit unless we consider it as a training of the subject's power of autosuggestion. The practitioner's ideal must be that of every genuine teacher, which is to render the pupil capable in the end of doing without a teacher. Herein we see a further motive for rejecting the hypothesis that induced suggestion as we advocate it involves social dangers. If we admit that unconscientious suggesters may avail themselves of a method which tends to enslave their subjects not to liberate them such suggesters will not secure the results derivable from the method described in the present work seeing that one of the essential principles of our method is to make the subject understand the mechanism of autosuggestion to give the pupil the key. It is above all on this account that the method is so successful and is able to furnish results far superior to those of methods based on heterosuggestion. Nor need this surprise us. Persons who appeal to autosuggestion display a fuller knowledge of the peculiarities of the mind and it is by understanding and applying the laws of nature that we can obtain the best results. Inevitably in such cases there is a struggle for existence between the rival methods. That which produces the best results will survive.

When induced suggestion, as above described has to be employed for the relief of some physical ailment the method is available to all. There is nothing distinctively medical about it, and there is no reason why it should remain a monopoly of medical practitioners. It can be used by all parents and by all educationists for the benefit of their children and their pupils. Its use does not require specialised knowledge of medicine. This follows from the law of subconscious teleology. We have merely to suggest



the idea of cure and the subconscious makes it its business to discover the physiological means for realising the cure without either the operator or the subject requiring to know what these means are

2 Turning to the outlook of the *subjects* we may say that for them also the method can be generalised with the exception of a small percentage of abnormal individuals, it is suitable for everyone's use. It is applicable to all persons and to all ages. No temperament will prove permanently refractory. There are none in whom suggestion is peculiarly liable to induce unfavourable results.

3 Turning finally to consider the *cases* suitable for suggestive treatment the possibilities of wide application are no less obvious. Bernheim drew a line between functional and organic maladies but for us the limits of suitable cases have been greatly extended. Great numbers of organic affections even those which physical methods of treatment have failed to relieve have yielded to the power of suggestion. In the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to say what are the limits of that power. The remarkable results secured in recent years have completely upset the ideas formerly entertained and we have a right to expect yet further advances. The inference is that suggestion may be tried and ought to be tried in every case.

Nay more. We are justified in affirming that suggestive treatment will at least give some relief in every case in which the patient remains conscious. Let us suppose for the sake of argument that there is some organic illness in which suggestion is absolutely powerless. If the patient's mind be dominated by the idea that he is suffering from such an illness, there will inevitably ensue (above all if the illness be attended by pain) a spontaneous suggestion which will aggravate the morbid state. Attention, mingled with emotion, returns despite itself to the idea of illness in everyone who knows himself to be ill and still more in anyone who actually feels himself to be ill. Suggestion is an inevitable sequel. The consequence is that in every actual case of illness there are two elements a

primary element which is the direct issue of the malady, and a secondary element which is the outcome of autosuggestion. Now if by hypothesis the primary element be rebellious to suggestive treatment the secondary element cannot fail to be amenable to suggestive treatment. Hence suggestive treatment will bring relief in all cases.

We may add that even in cases for which the use of physical methods of treatment is regarded as indispensable or advantageous there will still be plenty of scope for suggestive treatment as an auxiliary. Suggestion can make it easier for the patient to take distasteful medicines; it can help to overcome the undesirable effects of certain drugs; it can be used to induce anaesthesia when painful manipulations and operations are necessary.

I do not wish to advise every doctor to make a systematic use of direct suggestion. When a medical adviser proposes the use of suggestion the patient may accept the method with very little confidence in the result. On the other hand when a patient spontaneously applies to a specialist in suggestion he probably does so in the great majority of instances because at bottom he expects satisfactory results. In such conditions the soil is favourable and there is a much better chance of complete success. The patient consulting a doctor who does not usually practise as a suggester expects a prescription and ipso facto has some confidence in this prescription. The doctor must take advantage of such a state of mind and must use the prescription as the vehicle for indirect suggestion. Coué with his customary psychological acumen explains the matter as follows:

'If a doctor after examining his patient, writes a prescription and hands it over without comment, the drugs thus ordered are not likely to do much good. But when the practitioner explains that this medicine or that must be taken in such or such conditions and it will produce such or such effects the results thus described will rarely fail to occur. In my opinion whenever a patient consults a doctor the latter should always order some drug or other, even if drugs should not be really indicated

For the ordinary patient goes to see a doctor in the expectation that the doctor will prescribe a drug which will cure. Only in exceptional cases does the patient know that hygienic measures are of the first importance that he will be cured by following a regimen. These seem to him trifling matters. What he wants is a bottle of medicine.

Should the doctor merely prescribe a regimen and fail to order any medicine the patient is likely to be discontented. He will be apt to say to himself that since he has not been given any medicine he has wasted his time. Very often he will seek other advice. I consider therefore that the doctor should always prescribe some medicine for his patient. He should avoid ordering advertised specifics whose chief value is derived from the very fact of wide advertisement. He should write his own prescriptions for the patient will have far more confidence in these than in X's pills or Y's powders which can be bought from any druggist without a prescription.<sup>1</sup>

In this manner suggestion can be methodically employed without the patient being aware of the fact. A knowledge of the methods of indirect suggestion is invaluable to educationists and to parents no less than to medical practitioners. We may add that in these cases we depend less upon knowledge than upon tact and upon psychological insight.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. pp. 18 and 19

## CONCLUSION

### SUGGESTION AND THE WILL

SUGGESTION therefore is nothing more than autosuggestion. It is an active process which goes on in the interior of the individual and whose starting-point is an idea. If we consider these characters alone we may be inclined to confound suggestion with the will. But whereas a voluntary act is one of which consciousness is aware, the mechanism of a suggested act remains essentially subconscious. With this difference in character there is associated a practical difference. Suggestion (autosuggestion) does not bear its full fruit except on condition that it be not confounded with the will.

In the psychology of the schools it is customary to distinguish three types of mental activity—instinct, habit, and the will. Suggestion is not reducible to any of these categories. It is an activity *sui generis*, and must henceforward be allotted its place in psychology side by side with the other three. Neither theoretically nor practically is it less important than these.

Suggestion enables us to control something within our organism which is independent of the action of the will, something to which we can never hope to issue direct commands. We thus reacquire a privilege which, according to Delbœuf,<sup>1</sup> we originally possessed in an earlier stage of evolution. In those days the living being was fully aware of all that went on within. Owing to division of labour its attention was increasingly directed outwards and the supervision of the inner world was left to the

<sup>1</sup> Delbœuf, *De l'origine des effets curatifs de l'hypnotisme*. Bulletin Académie Royale de Belgique, 1887.

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subconscious However this may be suggestion seems to reestablish the supervision to reconquer a realm lost in the course of evolution and to reconquer it without any detriment to subsequent gains For whereas the will has no power to promote the development of suggestion this latter opening a path to the very centre of our being, can act on all our functions and all our faculties and can promote the development of the will itself

Suggestion like the will is a mode of activity dominated by a teleological principle it represents a continuous adaptation of means to the attainment of a desired end We can indicate the kinship between the will and suggestion and can simultaneously emphasise the difference between the two by saying that the teleology of the will is conscious whereas the teleology of suggestion is subconscious \*

The trend of contemporary psychology is to seek in the mind, at a lower level than that occupied by the fully conscious faculties, other forms of mental life which are deeper and less conspicuous

In this respect two contemporary movements are peculiarly significant

*In the affective sphere* Freud and the psychoanalysts have emphasised the existence of affective complexes of sentiments and tendencies, belonging to the realm of the subconscious, and unceasingly determining our actions without our being aware of the fact Psychoanalysis, bringing them to light, enables us to gain control over them and thus to escape their tyranny

On the other hand *in the representative sphere* Bergson has founded his philosophy upon the distinction between intelligence and intuition The latter slumbers in the depths of our being It seems to possess much of the

\* Instinct likewise works towards an end But instinct, according to Hartmann's definition is the conscious means for an unconscious (subconscious) end. Suggestion, on the other hand is the subconscious means for a conscious end. The contrast is stated in general terms finer shades being ignored.

knowledge which is of the greatest importance to life. By the study of intuition we are able to solve certain problems which we might never have been able to solve on purely intellectualist lines. Without pausing to consider the metaphysical consequences which Bergson draws from this distinction let us take it as it stands, considering it purely from the psychological outlook, from which we think it is hardly open to objection.

Finally the New Nancy School embodies a movement parallel to the two just named but a movement *in the active sphere*. In this field by the very nature of things the investigator is primarily led towards action rather than towards theory. Such was the path followed by Coué. Hitherto the New Nancy School has failed to become aware of the true psychological significance and of the vast bearing of its own affirmations. Suggestion (auto suggestion) is to the will what the complex is to the sentiment and what intuition is to intelligence.

The three foregoing doctrines mutually complementary, agree in indicating that in all the spheres of the psyche there exist deep and hidden strata. Far from being inferior in point of value to the superficial strata the deeper strata frequently yield us fruits which could never be secured from the surface consciousness.

Thus by three independent and parallel routes contemporary psychology discloses the subconscious and makes available its precious stores of mineral wealth. Coué like Freud and Bergson prefers to speak of the unconscious rather than of the subconscious choosing the former term precisely because he wishes to emphasise his view that the consciousness in question is not to be regarded as inferior to the superficial consciousness.

Furthermore, the term "unconscious" conveys the idea that the deeper psychological processes appear to be more or less independent one of another that they seem to be dissociated that they do not as does the superficial consciousness, constitute a synthesis centring

in 'the ego (the idea of synthesis being expressed by the prefix con ) On the other hand, the term 'unconscious' is inconvenient because it applies equally well to purely physiological processes to reflex action to mechanical responses to stimuli. If we employ it we have always to specify when we are speaking of a psychological unconscious. But in my opinion the term 'subconscious' can be precisely defined as the psychological unconscious. The word is already current in psychology and if it be clearly defined no confusion can possibly arise.

We may say then that psychoanalysis intuitionism (considered apart from all metaphysics) and the teachings of the New Nancy School, contribute to the same general movement. These three doctrines enable us to enter the subconscious open ways for us into the hidden recesses of our being. Thereby they greatly enlarge our knowledge of ourselves disclosing the causes of what we have hitherto known only as effects. Since knowledge is power they increase our command of life. At the same time they meet the wishes of William James who regretted the way in which we live only on the surface of things. Hence forward we can penetrate into the depths and we are entitled to expect great results from these new possibilities.

The parallelism might be carried still further, especially as regards the distinction between the views of Bergson and the views of Coué. Just as the organic control rendered possible by suggestion seems to be the recovery of an ancient heritage which had been lost in the course of evolution, so the Bergsonian intuition is at its deepest roots identified with instinct. Intuition is not so much to be won by a

\* It is essential that writers on these topics should come to a definite understanding in regard to the use of these words. Bernheim in a recently published work (*Automatisme et suggestion* Alcan Paris 1917) is frequently the victim of a confusion in terms. He identifies the subconscious with a vague consciousness whereas he regards the unconscious as a priori non psychological and identifies it with automatism. The consequence is that the phenomena of suggestion not being automatic are simply conscious and by very definition cannot be unconscious. By this paradox experiment is falsified and observation is distorted.

new conquest as to be reconquered. If we have lost it in the past it is because our attention has been more and more attracted by the needs of outward activity demanding new adaptations.

Intelligence constitutes one of these adaptations. It is the mode of knowledge which is applicable to crude matter whereas intuition is the mode of knowledge which is applicable to life. Intuition is the primitive mode of knowledge from which intelligence is derived by adaptation. That is why we can never arrive at intuition by way of intelligence whereas we can pass from intuition to intelligence by following the path of differentiation which has been pursued by evolution.

Now there are identical relationships between suggestion and the will.

If this be so, we may sum up the distinction by saying that the will is the normal mode of acting on matter on the external world whereas suggestion is the normal mode of acting on ourselves quâ living beings. Experience confirms the hypothesis.

When we wish to act on the physical world we must seek to know the laws which regulate its mechanism we must endeavour to elucidate the unending sequences of cause and effect. We are compelled to understand consciously to grasp the nexus of causality. The will fully conscious is at work.

But when we come to act on ourselves we can employ a very different method, that of suggestion. Here the saying 'Who wills the end wills the means' is no longer valid. It suffices to *think* the end. Everything then ensues as if our subconscious were familiar with all the details of our physical and mental organism, and as if it could deduce from this knowledge the means necessary for realising the proposed end. Here the end which has to be attained appears to find its own means, just as the poem which is to be born gives rise in the mind of the poet to the words fit for its expression.

But if we are living beings in whom teleology tends to realise itself spontaneously, we are none the less parts



of the material world the world where mechanism reigns. Consequently an action analogous to that which we exercise on the physical world remains legitimate. Such an action is exerted in the ordinary practice of medicine.

It follows that medicine and suggestion are complementary like a couple of forces acting in contrary directions and therefore unable to rival one another. Or we may say that the first acts from without being centripetal. The second acts from within being centrifugal. Though each taken alone is doubtless inadequate by uniting they can realise the fable of the blind man and the paralytic.

Suggestive practice therefore must not be looked upon as a chapter of medicine any more than suggestion must be regarded as a special case of will. The two belong to distinct categories. Suggestive practice is not properly speaking a therapeutic method. With the work of the New Nancy School it passes from the medical to the pedagogical sphere. It does not so much consist of a descriptive science as of an education or reeducation of certain mental aptitudes and habits which human beings have been tending more and more to lose.

Modern times have been characterised by the conquest of the material world. It is therefore natural that when we turn back to man we should retain the habits of thought we have contracted in our prolonged intercourse with the physical universe. Such is the invariable method of conventional medicine. Thereby however it reaches no more than a part of the human being. It moves from without inwards though there is just as much need that it should radiate from the centre to the periphery. It has a wide knowledge of the effect of physical agents upon man but we still have to learn the reaction of the human mind upon physical agents.

The work of modern science is a great achievement but it is incomplete. For its completion a certain change is necessary both in outlook and method. As the philosopher Spinoza has well put it 'We are masters of nature externally alone inwardly we are nature's slaves.'

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Studying only too well all that surrounds us we have forgotten our own personality and now or never is the moment when we must put into practice the maxim of Thales Know thyself The doctrine of the New Nancy School, in conjunction with other doctrines of contemporary psychology enables us to make a great advance in this knowledge

## GLOSSARY

- Acceptation** The acceptance of an idea by the subconscious
- Acceptivity** The readiness with which the subconscious accepts an idea (Readiness to accept heterosuggestion)
- Autosuggestion** The subconscious realisation of an idea in more or less complete independence of heterosuggestion
- Censor** The or The endopsychic censor A figurative impersonation to denote the sum of repressive forces
- Collectedness** The state of outcropping of the subconscious resulting from a willed (but not voluntary) relaxation (See **Relaxation**, below)
- Complex.** A group of emotionally tinged ideas partially or entirely repressed (Usual Definition of Psychoanalysts) An integration of images memories sentiments conscious and unconscious reasonings interlacing one with another and to all appearance inextricably intertangled (Bandoun)
- Concentration.** A state of autohypnosis and of persistent contention with one idea the autohypnosis having been induced by the lulling influence of the idea on the mind
- Contention** Is a psychological equivalent of attention minus effort It is the state we attain to by means of collectedness (q v) Some writers term this state concentration but see **Concentration**.
- Derivation** See **Sublimation**
- Fascination** The capturing of the attention by some sensory phenomenon
- Fixed Idea** The ultimate degree of obsession
- Foreconscious.** See **Preconscious**
- Hallucination.** An imaginary sensation one to which no objective reality corresponds
- Hallucination by Compromise.** A hallucination suggested by the illusory interpretation of an objective reality
- Heterosuggestion.** The subconscious realisation of an idea suggested by another  
Also the act of suggesting an idea to another
- Hypnosis.** A general name for states of outcropping of the subconscious produced by immobilisation of the attention and for states of somnolence which are distinguishable from ordinary drowsiness by their mode of production

- Ideoreflex Process** The process by which an idea realises itself or tends to realise itself in action (It is to this that Baudouin limits the signification of the term suggestion)
- Obsession.** The capturing of the attention by something purely subjective an image a memory or an idea.
- Outcropping of the Subconscious** The invasion of the normal waking consciousness by uprushes from the subconscious
- Passivity** See **Acceptivity**
- Preconscious** A region of the mind containing memory traces which can only be aroused by exceptionally strong stimuli or by special effort (This region is transitional between Consciousness and the subconscious Sometimes spoken of by psychoanalysts as the foreconscious)
- Relaxation.** The release of mental tension the cessation of attention and the suspension of inhibition which favours the outcropping of the subconscious This relaxation is the outcome of a decision of the will but a decision in virtue of which the will abdicates for a season Relaxation is precisely this abdication
- Repression** The keeping from consciousness of mental processes that would be painful to it
- Schemata** Fragmentary or simplified equivalents of sensations emotions sentiments memories images and other mental states
- Subconscious.** A region of the mind normally inaccessible to consciousness (Usually spoken of by psychoanalysts as the unconscious See pp 275 and 276)
- Sublimation** The employment of energy belonging to a primitive instinct in a new and derived i.e. non primitive channel E.g. the use of sexual energy in intellectual love or creative artistic work (Tansley) The process of enlisting the unconscious in the work that is available for social purposes (Lay)
- Suggestibility** Readiness to realise a suggestion  
 • (In Baudouin's use of the term—in more or less complete independence of heterosuggestion)  
 Readiness to realise an autosuggestion
- Suggestion** The subconscious realisation of an idea.  
 (See also **Ideoreflex Process**)
- Transference.** The mental substitution for an abstract emotional object of some visible object which can symbolically represent it.
- Unconscious** See **Subconscious**

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